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"Know ye not who would be free themselves must strike the blow."—BYRON.

TWENTY YEARS A FAKIR

GATE CITY BOOK AND NOVELTY COMPANY,

OMAHA, NEB.

PRICE, 50 CENTS.

TWENTY YEARS

A

FAKIR

BY

S. J. W.

"Weldon, S. James"

Gate City Book and Novelty Company,
Omaha, Neb.

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TWENTY YEARS A FAKIR.

INTRODUCTION.

The old adage, "An open confession is good for the soul," has no bearing on my case. I did not write this book to ease my conscience; but of my own free will, for my own amusement—and for yours, too, I trust. I am going to tell you how I made my money.

I will acknowledge in the outset that I was a fakir of the fakirs, a Simon-pure article. Today I occasionally run across an old acquaintance, who greets me with an admonishing grin, and the apostrophe, "Look at the airs he puts on now; and I can remember when he hadn't two dimes to rub together."

Yes, my friend, your memory serves you right, but now I have my compensations. I can take my ease among the luxuries of a comfortable home; I can lean back on the cushions of a brougham, as

neat a turnout as you will see on the Central Park drive; I can occupy a box at the opera, or finger my bank-book, in which the figures are comfortable, and the balance on the right side.

It was ambition for wealth which drove me out in the world, to look about and hustle; and I acknowledge freely that hustle I did, in the fullest sense of the term.

What have I done?

Rather, what have I not done along the lines of a fakir's avocation? I believe at various times I have handled everything sold on the road. In giving you the arguments and methods employed in my different canvasses I have drawn solely from actual experience and observation, and endeavored as explicitly as possible to show how I overcame every obstacle and objection, and attained a flattering degree of success.

For obvious reasons, an accredited fakir would stand no show in running for public office; but he runs for everything else in sight, and allows the public offices to take care of themselves. In gen-

eral, he is a happy-go-lucky chap, who sleeps with one eye open, and dreams of 200 per cent. profits. He is a solid, windy bluff; an unscrupulous, honest trader; a rollicking, sober fellow; a truthful prevaricator; a generous absorber of money; a free dispenser of advice; a necessary adjunct to a circus, and not always thrown away at a church fair. He is the profitable terror of the hotel proprietor, the mash of the same proprietor's daughters, and the life of a friendly game of draw; always ready to shovel snow in July, or mow a blue grass lawn in January, if he can, as he certainly will, make his account out of such occupation. To summarize, he is a bundle of contradictions—easy, yet hard to understand; overflowing with the milk of human kindness, but professionally hard as rocks. In the way of business, no game is too high or too low for him to fly at or swoop down upon.

The life of a fakir is not easy sailing. He strikes many a stumbling block along the road. and is hampered by many a disadvantage. He

can have no continuous abiding place. He must move with the tide, and shift his operations from day to day. The business of this week will be the reminiscence of next. New fields, new customers, new fakes; for these he must be constantly on the alert, and work them to the most extreme limit. While on the road he is practically a citizen without a country and a man without a home.

This book is not launched upon the sea of public approval as a literary gem. It is merely an expose of the tricks and triumphs of twenty years of successful faking, and as such, without more words of explanation, allow me to present it.

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

STARTING OUT.

BECOMING AMBITIOUS—LEAVING HOME—HOTEL PORTER—CARD BUSINESS—LIGHTNING ROD AGENT—THE ACCIDENT—TWELVE GLASSES OF WATER.

I was born in the good old State of Illinois, my birthplace being on a farm just twenty miles out of Chicago. Here I lived until I was eighteen years of age. My father was fairly well fixed as a farmer and gave me as good an education, both classical and musical, as a country residence could afford. In those early days of my life the western half of the United States was virtually in its infancy, and all around me, in whatever direction the eye might turn, new enterprises were being launched with a view to the development of the country. Reading

of these created a desire on my part to see some of them, and perhaps take my humble part in the great work of building up the new side of the nation.

One day I would read of a new railroad building here; another day of a new town starting there. Fresh sections of the country were being opened up, with hundreds of channels and opportunities for making money. The glowing description of a hundred new Meccas, given by their sanguine projectors, worked my curiosity to a very high tension, and the more I thought of them the stronger grew my desire to get out in the world and see, and before I fairly knew it my mind was made up.

For eighteen long years (pleasant ones I must confess) I had lived on the farm, and had never so much as ridden on a railroad train. No wonder I thought it high time to get out and see with my own eyes what was going on in this great,

round world, looking meantime for the niche in it which I was to fill.

One day I told father of my desires and intentions. He ridiculed my ideas, and, when that was of no avail, tried solid argument. He showed me that farming was an honorable and sure profession, and the life of the farmer one that was both pleasant and independent. He went on to say that if I remained with him I would grow up to be a respected citizen, and eventually become owner of the farm. If I aspired to political honors I could obtain almost anything I wanted. I could be a member of the district school board. At some later day I might be township trustee, or even reach the sublime position of a county commissioner.

But, no. The seed had been sown, and it was too late to pull up the sprouted plant. I wanted to travel and see something of the world. I was determined to have experience with and insight into the rugged, rough and rapid side of life—

and I got it. I was just burning up with enthusiasm. I desired to move around, to expand, to go out and "hustle," and grow rich myself, if I could.

I confess I hated to leave my parents and the good old home, though the conversation with my father showed me that his opposition would not be extreme. I lingered around for several days, unwilling to declare my positive intention, but awaiting some favorable opportunity and good excuse to cut loose from the ties of home.

Both came. I went out one day with father to build a shed for the chickens, and an argument arose as to the best way of proceeding. He wanted his way; I wanted mine. The controversy continued until father got mad and shoved me aside, calling me a d— fool.

It was the nearest approach to swearing I had ever heard him make. My chance had come. Picking up my coat, and facing my worthy lord, I said:

"Dad, I have the honor, sir, of being your son."

With that I returned to the house. Three days later I left the farm.

On the morning of my departure I embraced my dear old mother and my sister, and accompanied by my father drove into "town." We stopped at a place then known as lower State Street.

We conversed together for some minutes, he giving me the usual, good, fatherly advice, with a "God bless you, my son," etc. At last he turned to go, and as he did so slipped a twenty dollar bill into my hand, while I could see the tears starting in his eyes at what seemed to him almost an eternal parting. I watched the going of the good old man as far as I could see him, and those were the most unpleasant moments of my whole life. I believe, had I possessed the nerve, I would have taken the first wagon I could find going that way and returned home.

I was in for it, however, and having decided in

my mind that I had to stick it out, this feeling soon wore off in the light of the strange sights and stranger fancies inspired in a pedestrian tour through the heart of Chicago.

My first desire was to become somewhat acquainted with the city. I was not yet worrying about "a job," for I had plenty of money in my pocket. Including the twenty dollars given me by father, my store of wealth reached the almost fabulous amount of one hundred dollars, and I had a strong suspicion that before that could give out I would become a millionaire.

Being from the country, everything looked grand to me. I bought every fake that was in sight, and took in everything that came along. For days the revelry was high. Side-shows and museums charmed me. I listened to the patter of the street venders, allowing myself to be "worked" by every one of them. I patronized liberally the street musicians, and even dropped a little coin with the fortune tellers. For a time I lived in this

kind of a fool's paradise. Then I retired to my room and took an account of stock.

I found I had bought numerous kinds of soap, many bottles of cologne, and fewer of medicine that would cure every ailment ever heard of on earth. I had tin whistles galore, and all the useless knick-knacks under the sun.

I also had three dollars and eighty cents in cash. When this balance was struck I understood that it was time for serious work to begin. I threw away the whole batch of impracticable accumulations and began to hunt round for something to do.

After "looking around" all day, and meeting with many rebuffs, I succeeded in getting a job in a hotel as a sort of all-round rustler.

Being a strong country lad the heavy work all fell to my share; and I want to tell you right now that before the second day was over I fully realized what it was to be away from home, and thrown out into the world upon my own resources.

I was made to handle heavy baggage, carry water and coal, and do a thousand other things for which my main capacity was strength and awkwardness.

I was guyed by every one and given nicknames of every sort. Some would call me "Sport;" others, "Snipes," "Jiggers," "His Nibs," while all ordered me around as if I were really and truly a nobody, instead of the son of a well-to-do farmer not over twenty miles away.

I slept in a large inside room upstairs with the rest of the male help, which was all packed in together, colored, white and all. The other boys took it good naturedly, and I was forced to. My salary was the enormous sum of two dollars and fifty cents a week, which was increased a little by the "tips" I occasionally received. Unfortunately for me, the boys around the hotel taught me how to shoot dice, play poker and seven-up, and even flip-at-the-crack. At none of these games was I

a success, and at the end of the month it was a certainty that I would be "busted."

After a few months of this I was brought to my senses, however, and decided to quit the hotel business, since, for me, there was no money in it, and little prospect of promotion.

Traveling men had patronized the hotel quite liberally, and I had always marked them as a lot of jolly, happy-go-lucky fellows, whose every pocket seemed to be lined with gold. Ah, if I could only be one of them and get on the road! If some house would furnish me a line of samples and start me out, then I, too, could wear good clothes, have plenty of money, order some poor fools around in the way I had been ordered, and perhaps make my mark in the world. I thought then that the only man in the world was the drummer (and I think so yet for that matter).

Unfortunately, try as I might, I found no way to break into the ranks. The managers of every wholesale house I went to laughed at me. When

I asked for a position the jobber would always inquire who I had been with and what I was doing at present. When I answered that I was first assistant porter and commander-in-chief of the water and coal conveying department of the Robber Roost Hotel, they would smile and say, "No, my son; I'm sorry, but I can't do anything for you today." You see, I had neither experience, reputation nor references.

In addition to my personal explorations I scanned the want columns of the daily papers, in the hope of finding something which would suit my case. One day I read the following ad.:

"*Wanted*—A young man to canvass and sell our new line of calling cards. Every lady wants them and buys them on sight. Large sample outfit free. $15.00 per week easily made."

To make a long story short, I called at once and made arrangements with the firm to sell calling cards. In this way I received my first real

start in life, and was initiated into the ranks of Fakirdom.

The nature of my arrangement with the card firm amounted to about this. They were to furnish samples, I was to solicit orders, collect cash as the order was taken, turn over half of the money to them, keeping the other half myself, and they were to fill orders as soon as possible.

Well, I started out the following morning, and I'll never forget that day as long as I live. I went clear to the outskirts of the city and rang my first door bell.

The lady of the house answered in person, and when she faced me I had neither nerve nor courage to explain my business. I began to grow red in the face and nervous. I weakly asked for a glass of water, which I drank, and then departed. I had the same experience at the next house, and after drinking twelve glasses of water went back to my room, disgusted with myself and everybody else.

In the afternoon I screwed my courage up a few notches higher and went out again, with the determination to do or die. I knew I had a fine line of cards, and the boss told me they would sell themselves. I vowed that at least they should have a chance. I showed them to a few ladies, and finally succeeded in taking my first order, for twenty-five cents. With that I felt encouraged, and went after them right. I did one dollar and twenty cents worth of business that afternoon, making sixty cents for myself. Just think of it. A man in the heart of Chicago, with his fortune all to make, and after walking his legs off all day, coming in at night with sixty cents as his portion, and board to pay out of it at that.

But the ice had been broken; the plunge had been made, and I was proud and happy over the result. I stuck to the card business for some months, finally getting so I could make from one to two dollars a day at it.

One day I chanced to fall into conversation

with a lightning rod agent, who had taken a room in the house where I boarded. In a short time we struck up quite a friendship, and he proposed that I should travel with him. In consideration of my services, which would be only in helping him put up the rods, he agreed to pay all my expenses, teach me the business, and allow me to sell calling cards on the side.

I accepted, and here let me say that I never fully realized what a truly typical lightning rod agent was until I started out with this man. I had heard of them, and remembered that my father was trimmed up to the tune of a couple of hundred dollars by one, but I never understood the breadth of intellect, fertility of resource and depths of trickery displayed in the legitimate pursuit of this vocation until I had obtained an inside view of the game.

I traveled with Mr. Carlysle for a long while, working the country, and the towns as we passed through them. As this is to be largely a record of

my own personal performances, I shall not give the details of this trip, except that I learned all that was going, which was a great deal. At the end of it we were on our way to Davenport, Iowa. I was getting tired of the business, and intended to quit when we reached that destination. I had twenty-three dollars in cash to show for my seven months' work, and figured on fixing myself up a little and looking for a job. I could not travel and sell calling cards exclusively, since there was not enough in it to justify the expense, and I thought it high time for me to look around for some broader and more profitable field.

Just as we got within a mile of the city our horse shied at a runaway team and Mr. Carlysle was thrown out of the wagon, run over, and both legs broken. He was taken into the city; and hotel, doctor and medicine bills broke us both as flat as anything you ever saw.

I tried to get a job, but could not find a thing. I was known as the lightning rod agent's friend,

and no one would have me at any price. It seemed as though every one there had a dread, or horror, of a lightning rod man and all his belongings. Mr. Carlysle was taken to the charity hospital, while I was turned out of the hotel to hustle the best I could.

Just imagine! There I was, a perfect stranger, not knowing a soul, hundreds of miles from home, without a cent in my pocket, and unable to get a thing to do.

Should I become a tramp, begging at back doors for handouts of broken victuals; or would it be best to starve and be done with it? One way or the other, it looked as though these questions would soon have to be settled.

CHAPTER II.

BUSTED—SOAP SIGNS—WALKING—THE TWO ACTORS—FREE THEATRES—JUMPING BILLS—THE OTHER FAKIR—PEN SCHEME—STREET TALK—THE FRIENDLY HAYSTACK.

Every man who has ever rustled on the road has had his experiences with that peculiar disease known as shortness of cash. I believe I have been "busted" more times than any other man on earth; and I am sure that the disease never elsewhere struck me with half the stunning force then it did when adrift and alone in the streets of Davenport.

It was positively my first experience of the kind. At home it was nothing strange to have an empty pocket from one week's end to another; but what of that? Board was free, and a roof-tree overhead, while the paternal pocket was ready to respond to any demands within reason. In Chicago my finances had been perilously near to low water mark, but that needed to cause no uneasiness. A

walk of a day and I could be feasting on the fatted calf.

But to be stranded in Davenport was a different matter. I remember, in the midst of my troubles, there popped into my head an old couplet, learned in my days at the public school:

"Take heart, nor of the laws of fate complain;
Though now it be cloudy, it will clear up again."

With that in my mind I took on a moral brace and marched down the street, willing to meet fate half way, and looking for something to do that might show a profit, however small.

I found it.

Had I not been cut out by nature, and the special design of Providence for the vocation which I have so successfully followed, it is more than likely I would have sat down, with my head on my hands, and wept. I confess I felt like it for a moment. When I had resolutely thrust such weakness out of my mind, and taken a calmer view of the situation, I saw a glimmer of light ahead.

A miserably written placard in a store window furnished the inspiration.

In my early school days if there was any one thing I excelled in it was penmanship, and with decent opportunity, and a propulsion in such direction, I might have made a fair draughtsman, or a very decent sign painter. Whether I would have made a fortune or not is another question.

At this moment of distress I remembered some "work" I had seen done in Chicago by a traveling "artist," and that for the sake of amusement I had tried my hand at it for an hour. I went back to the hotel, and begged or borrowed a piece of soap. Then I worked store after store for sign work, promising to put up a magnificent one on each window, done in soap froth, for the inconsiderable sum of ten cents.

The thing was new to the most of them, and perhaps curiosity helped me. I was curious myself to know what I could do; and am not sure

whether I was glad or sorry when the first merchant told me to fall to work.

But at it I went. A dozen strokes gave me confidence, and half a dozen jobs gave me skill. I made one dollar during the rest of the day, and two and a half the next. I lived on crackers and cheese the whole time, and cleaned the windows of a livery barn for permission to sleep in the office. The third day I had apparently exhausted the field, business fell off, and I determined to leave the town.

First, I went to the hospital, to take leave of Mr. Carlysle, and tried to force on him a share of my earnings. He refused, as at present he was well taken care of, and expected a small remittance in a few days, when he hoped to be sufficiently recovered to leave the city and attend to some business which would probably net him a little money. Bidding him good-bye, I slung my budget on my back and took to the ties, without any fair idea of where I was going or what I

should do. I had a cash capital of three or four dollars in my pocket, and the art of making soap-foam signs at my fingers' ends. I had also heard of a pressing want for laborers in a construction gang which was working on an intersecting railroad, and if the worst came to the worst I was able to handle a shovel or pick against the best of them. I was not brought up on a farm for nothing.

The sign business stayed with me fairly well. Even the smallest towns were willing to pay for an exhibition of my skill, and hard times soon developed a faculty for economical living. I cleared my expenses, at least, and some days did a trifle more. Of course, this was better than nothing, but was not satisfactory to my ambition. At such a rate fortune was a long way off, and it seemed to me the time was about ripe for something else, even though it should turn out to be no better.

When I once began to look about me it was not long before the something else turned up. I followed the railroad track, to make sure of good

walking, and on the ties one morning I fell in with a couple of actors, whose finances were even at a lower ebb than mine. They were all-round variety people, and had their musical instruments with them, but there was not a cent of money in the whole outfit.

It did not take long for us to fraternize, especially as I carried a store of cold victuals which, at a pinch, might serve as a lunch for all of us. At noon we stopped at a spring in the shade of the woods, and, after making a moderate meal, put our heads together in a consultation as to the future.

The men were somewhat acquainted with this part of the country, and spoke of a small town a short distance ahead, where a hall could be obtained at a very moderate expense. We decided, if possible, to arrange for the use of this hall on sharing terms, and give a grand, free entertainment, to be interspersed with a collection.

We all "managed" the venture. By this time

I had rubbed off quite a large percentage of the moss with which I was ornamented when first making my entrance into public life, and had wit enough to conceal a total ignorance of the show business and its possibilities. We arranged for the hall, on the percentage plan, and advertised ourselves by a little playing and singing on the street, an occasional blast from the horn that one of the party could really use in a rather creditable manner, and an announcement which I made at the top of my voice, and as near after the manner of a side-show "blower," as I knew how:

"Free entertainment this evening at eight thirty, at Bixley's Hall. Fun by the barrel and music by the cord. Singing and dancing by the world renowned Milton Brothers, and an afterpiece that will split your side. Leave your buttons at home if you don't want them busted; and don't get your measure taken for a new suit of clothes until the show is over. You are bound to laugh and grow fat."

This, and other nonsense, I howled out at the top of my voice, and before I had been at it a quarter of an hour "the Milton Brothers" wanted to know with what show I had last been hitting the road. They had a curiosity to know who else was stranded. You may be certain I did not give myself away, and yet I returned a fairly satisfactory answer.

Had we charged even a nickel I doubt if we could have drummed up the skeleton of an audience; but for a free entertainment—it was immense. The people came in crowds, and responded nobly when the "deacon" passed the hat.

There is all the difference in the world in towns and the crowds you gather in them. This crowd was willing to be amused, came to be amused, and had made up its mind not to be disappointed. They were with us from start to finish, and when we "counted up the house" found the collection amounted to within a fraction of twenty dollars. After paying for the hall, and some little inci-

dental expenses, we had remaining about three dollars and a half apiece, and a large stock of confidence in the future.

That party was a wise one in its day and generation. The weather was delightful, the roads good, the moon near to full; for these reasons, and others, we took a promenade after the show was out. In other words, we saved the expense of a hotel bill, and went on to the next town, getting what rest we wanted in a friendly haystack along the road. While the Milton Brothers' combination lasted we paid the hotels less money, and lived better, than I had thought possible. We had generally got in too late for dinner, and an order for supper was enough to insure the moral support of the landlord. Probably he was disappointed that he did not see the color of our money, but that was no matter.

The business was grand while it lasted, and I continued to be a showman for some time. We went from town to town, walking when the dis-

tance was not too great, riding in box-cars sometimes, giving entertainments similar to the first, occupying halls when we could get them, but content with an empty store or dining room in the hotel at which we temporarily stopped. Sometimes, of course, there was very little profit, but oftener there was a fair dividend. Before long we had accumulated at least twenty dollars apiece. Passing through a large town, we succeeded in getting hold of a quantity of old lithographs and pictorial sheets. With these posters and a few small streamers and dodgers we billed a smaller town not far away for a "Grand Theatrical Entertainment," charging regular prices of admission.

Success was with us. After counting up the house, and deducting expenses, we found we were on the sunny side of fifty dollars.

Such a result as this was too much for us. We began to think that our time had come. Bob Milton talked of telegraphing for "people" to join us

on ahead; and all of us figured up the cost of putting a show on the road that would carry eight or ten actors, and play the larger towns.

Had I even imagined myself born to the buskin, I suppose I would have taken up with the idea as enthusiastically as anyone. Fortunately, the footlights had never cast their glamour over me, and I had always regarded this venture as a makeshift and a stepping-stone. When I had done a few sums in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, I suggested that the time was hardly ripe for such a scheme. We were doing very well as it was, among the smaller towns, where theatres had no season, and the population could not, and would not, support a regular company. As for playing the larger towns, I did not believe it could be done for a month yet; and, meanwhile, if we tried it, we would have abundant opportunity to drop our little capital and become hopelessly involved. I thought it would be the part of wisdom to keep on as we had been doing, playing on vel-

vet, and week by week adding to our slender store; otherwise, I thought I could retire from the show business.

To this view the boys finally and grumblingly consented, after having obtained my consent, by way of compromise, to hiring a hall at a fair-sized town not far away, and trying again the racket of a fine entertainment.

I think I had a presentment of failure, and presentments are not things to be trifled with. Surely, nothing ever fell quite so flat as that night's work. We had to procure a license, we had to put up five dollars in advance on the hall rent, our hotel bill was of respectable proportions, there were other incidental expenses—and we gave no show at all. There was no gang at the door that night, no rush for the front seats, no audience, no money, no nothing. A dozen boys and men presented themselves at the door, but the most of them were dead-heads. They filed dismally into the hall, and filed more dismally out

again. The "house remained dark" after all. The Miltons concluded that it was more profitable to dismiss the audience and immediately "skip by the light of the moon" than to remain and wrestle with such complications as the balance of the hall rent, the hotel bill, and other like troubles which fate might send them.

Though the venture had made considerable inroad on our capital, I cannot say that I was particularly cast down, being full of that exhilaration which comes from the ability and the right to say, "I told you so." I objected, moreover, to the shirking of a bill which we had the means to pay without its causing us any serious financial embarrassment. Also, I was interested in the possible cause of our failure, which was a street fakir, whose harangue I had heard from the doorway of the hall, where I was in attendance.

Up to this time any little efforts I had made upon the lines which I have so long followed with such great success, had been addressed to the indi-

vidual rather than to the crowd. I had heard street talkers, to be sure, but had never analyzed their methods, or thought seriously of following the profession.

I had wit of my own, however, and from the moment this fellow set up his stand I recognized the finger of destiny, and made the most of my opportunity. He was an orator in his way, and I can not do better here than to give the sum and substance of a discourse which put much money in his purse, and wrecked the Milton Theatrical Combination.

He was selling pens.

The article was good enough of its kind, and one probably familiar to the reader. It was brass, but looked like gold, and so flexible that it could stand any sort of abuse, except continuous writing, without being harmed in the least.

He had his little folding, three-legged stand, a torch, and a rough piece of board. He would rub the point of the pen up and down and jab it into

the rough surface of the board, spread the points apart, put them together again, and then, filling it with ink, write and shade as artistically as you please. All the time he was so maltreating the poor pen he was keeping up a running fire of talk:

"Hey there, everybody! Come right this way. There is plenty of time. The show won't open for half an hour, and meanwhile I want the chance to do you good. I would like to give away lots of money—fives, tens, twenties, fifties—everything up to a hundred dollar bill. I'm a down-town, Eastern Yankee millionaire, and I've got more money than I know what to do with. If you'll lend me your attention for a few moments I'll make every mother's son of you rich and happy—in your mind at least.

"Here is a little article known as the automatic, Goldentine pen. It reads, writes and talks in sixty-four different languages, and is one of the handiest little articles you ever gazed on.

"It is small, gentlemen, but one of the toughest

little staples that was ever brought into the world to bless mankind.

"In the first place, I will ask some gentleman from the audience to select a pen from the box. Any one in the lot will do. They are all exactly alike, so it makes no difference which one you take. Ah, thank you, sir. Now, I will take this pen, place it in this handsome penholder, and then rub the point up and down on this rough, pine board, in this manner, just as you would a stick. That should be a good enough test to convince anyone, but we will not stop at that. I'll take the little pen and stick it into the board, just as though it was a knife-blade. And not only that. I'll take the little points of the pen and bend them apart till they have the appearance of just getting over a drunk.

I know it looks hard to so abuse a little thing like this—but like a careful curator, we'll just place the points back in their original position, like this, stick the little pen in the ink like that,

just as though nothing had ever happened to it. There is its work on the paper. You saw it done or you wouldn't have believed it. Is it not beautiful? The lines are fine enough, and graceful enough, to satisfy the dreams of an artist—'fair as the sun, clear as the moon, gentlemen, and beautiful as an army with banners.'

"If you want to write cross-eyed, or left-handed, it works just the same; and when it comes to German, French, Spanish, Danish, Irish, Scotch, Latin or Choctaw, the employment is identical. If you wish to come up and try before you buy, you are at perfect liberty to do so.

"I have here, also, a stock of beautiful silver-nickel penholders, that cost you a quarter the world over, and I couldn't sell them to you at any less. As a special inducement for your patronage, I'll make this proposition:

"Every man who buys a box of pens, one dozen in a box, gets two of these elegant holders, free,

gratis, without cost or consideration. Who is the first man to pass up a quarter?

"Hurry up, gentlemen, I've only got about ten more minutes to talk to you before the show begins. (The wretch was perhaps postponing the beginning of that show until the outer end of eternity, for there was a suspicion in the crowd that he belonged to it, and that nothing would be done in the hall until he ceased talking outside.) If you came to me after that and offered me fifty dollars for a single pen I wouldn't sell to you. Live and let live is my motto, and I never would do anything to interfere with another man's business. It is probably the first, last and only time in your lives that you will have the chance to buy the Automatic, Indestructible, Goldentine Pen at any such figures, and if you go to your jeweler he will charge you a dollar and a half or two dollars for an article not half so good. Where are—ah, yes. Here they come, here they come. Don't crowd so, my friends, I'll get around to you all by and by."

That was the substance of his opening oration, but he had jokes by the dozen and could hold the crowd at will. I am not sure but that the first purchasers were dummies, as the boys who came and broke the ice had a sheepish look; but the ice was fairly broken, and for quite a while he drove a roaring trade.

By the time I had got from under his hypnotic spell, my late companions were a mile or more out of town, and I was once more free to follow my own inclination and devices.

What of that? This time I was not busted, and I saw glimpses of a promising land ahead.

CHAPTER III.

MEETING PROF. CARTER—THE MUSIC SCHEME—FLOWERS AND NOVELTIES—THE LADIES—THE SOAP RACKET—STREET GAGS AND JOKES—THE SINKING VESSEL.

I did not allow myself to be troubled over the disappearance of the other members of the Milton Combination. In such an affair every tub has to stand on its own bottom, and I had no visible baggage which the hall owner could attach, or any irate landlord claim as his own until all scores were paid.

I went around to the hotel and coolly informed the proprietor that the manager and his partner had skipped, leaving my salary unpaid, but that, fortunately, I had enough to settle my own modest bill for the night, and that if he chose I would pay it then and there. Despite his ill humor over the loss of a few dollars, I think I must have suc-

ceeded in arousing his sympathy, for he touched my purse but lightly, and treated me pleasantly enough.

It is quite possible I would have gone with the rest of the Combination, or started out on a moonlight journey by myself, had it not been that I wanted to see more of that fakir. I knew now that he was stopping at the same hotel, and thought I recognized in him a kindred spirit, with whom it might be well to confer. He came in half an hour or so after I did, and, being in high good humor over his evening's work, I did not find him at all hard to approach.

Of coure, at the outset, I was cautious about letting him see my motive, and I opened the conversation by saying in a jocular manner that I had to thank him for breaking up our show. The people were not going to pay to see it when theyy could get something as good or better outside for nothing.

"See here, pard, you don't mean to say you're

in earnest? I'm business to the hub, you understand; but I meant just what I told them over there when I said I wouldn't make a sale after you began. How hard are you up against it? I'm willing to make a fair divvy."

He put his hand in his pocket as he spoke, and I guess he actually meant it.

I told him I was all right and that he needed to feel no concern. I had been opposed to the venture here from the start, and was not at all averse to a separation from my companions, as I was about tired of the show business, anyhow.

I answered some questions which he asked; and then, in turn, grew a little inquisitive. By this time we had got back in the corner, with no one to hear us if we talked in a moderate tone, and he spoke very freely.

He admitted that he had made a very fair evening's work of it. The pens he sold at twenty-five cents a dozen cost him thirty-five a gross, and the boxes and penholders were not sufficiently expen-

sive to make a very large hole in his profits. He thought perhaps he would remain in the place at least for another day. "The pen business," he said, "is only a side line, to work in the evenings, and I haven't covered the town yet in my canvass."

"Then you don't confine yourself to the sale of pens?" I asked. I had supposed the profits of the evening were sufficient to satisfy almost any man.

"Not by a jug full," he answered; "you've only got one life at your finger ends, and if you want them to stick fast to much of anything you've got to keep moving. And then, you're liable at any moment to strike a town that has been worked on some particular racket, and you've got to have another up your sleeve. I have half a dozen of them. If a place isn't ripe for one, another is sure to win."

"Good! You are just the man I have been wanting to see. Don't you need an apprentice? I have never done much open-air talking to a crowd,

but I have always had an idea that I would be great at something of that kind."

My blunt proposition took him somewhat aback; but he saw that I was in earnest, and looked me over.

"My friend, you appear as though you might be cut out for a business man. I don't, as a rule, need any help, but if you have a little money, and think I can do you any good, I don't mind giving you a start. I can't do anything with you in this town, though. You have given them all an idea of what your line of business is, and for the present couldn't change the opinion. You couldn't give away a box of pens and throw in a dime. You'll have to wait till we get to the next place. Then you'll find out pretty quick what you are good for."

I was well enough satisfied with this, as the night before our haystack had been uncomfortable, and I had a feeling that I not only wanted a good night's rest, but that I had earned it, and the

following day I rested, accordingly.

"Do you know anything about music?" my companion asked, as we prepared to leave the place.

I answered that I did; that I had some knowledge of notes, was particularly apt at catching up a tune by ear, and even had a smattering knowledge of the piano and violin.

"Good. All that won't hurt you just now. I have been working the cheap music racket by daylight, and it has not turned out so badly. I expect to do a bigger business in the next place, though, and I'll work it in a different way. My pens are all sold out, and I'll have no side lines to sell till I meet my next lot."

At that I asked him some questions about the music business, and he briefly explained.

In these degenerate days music, like everything else, has become cheap. In the times I am speaking of sheet music commanded a pretty stiff price at retail; and if we could only sell enough of it

there was a chance for an enormous profit, even when sold away below regular rates, and there were chances to buy at wholesale "cheap" sheet music which cost but a song.

All this my companion, whose name was Carter, explained as we went along. There was really so little of a "fake" about what he proposed to do that I hardly believed he would have the success he seemed to anticipate.

Nevertheless, it all worked to a charm. The town selected was just large enough to have a number of amateur pianists and vocalists, and not sufficiently extensive for a store which kept sheet music in any great quantity.

There was a piano in the parlor of the hotel where we opened up, and almost the first act of Carter was to thump it vigorously, and after what looked to be quite an artistic fashion. He had me plaster the town with bills and posters which we found there in a bundle awaiting us, announcing the presence of Prof. Carter and an immense stock

of the most popular and fashionable music, which, in consequence of business affairs calling him to the east, he would sell on the easiest terms. Music for which the stores usually charged from thirty-five cents to several dollars he would sell at from fifteen up to seventy-five cents. And he had a list of the very choicest selections, which would be sold even lower. The names of the most classical and popular pieces were given, and it was also announced that the Professor could be consulted on musical matters, and the choice of pieces for consecutive practice, during his short stay.

For the first few days the ladies came flocking in, and usually bought from three to six pieces. Sometimes we sold as high as ten selections to one lady.

I soon saw that "The Professor" had a fair knowledge of his business, although, no doubt, his musical acquirements were somewhat superficial. The advice he gave gratuitously was sometimes equal to a high-priced lesson, and I won-

dered why he did not make an effort to follow the profession after a legitimate and exclusive manner. But he would not have been a fakir had he done that; and I confess he was one of the best all-round men I ever saw.

While he had a fair stock of the popular, catchy songs of the day, I noticed the price of it was the nearest to that marked by the publishers; while his greatest efforts to sell were made along the lines of "classical gems," and easy selections, which he would rapidly arrange together as a graduated system of practice. These pieces cost him the least of any in the lot. He could generally gauge pretty accurately the musical acquirements of a lady, and once she entered into conversation with him he was pretty sure to sell, not only the one piece she had thought of buying, but half a dozen or more.

I was of some slight assistance in the music deal, but the part I had to play related to something else, of which, in the start, I knew little or nothing, but under the rapid instructions of the

Professor I soon comprehended sufficiently to elicit his strong approval.

He had along with the music a nice little line of fancy feathers, flowers and other little novelties, which he placed in my charge, and though I had never handled such things before, it is an actual fact that the end of the first day found me talking as glibly about them as any milliner in the land. When the last customer had departed Carter turned to me and observed:

"No use, Jim, you've got it in you, and you'll never be anything else."

"Else than what?" I inquired.

"A fakir. Anyone who can talk up female fixtures and furbelows as you have done, without knowing any more about them than you do, and never make a break, is bound to scratch his mark. From the way you manipulate the dainty things you might have the touch for a slight-of-hand performer and magician, but with that smooth tongue of yours I fancy you have chosen about right."

I suppose I blushed at his praise, but tried to take it as a matter of course, and asked what he would have done if customers had refused to call.

"Oh, called on them, if I thought the town was worth the working. Otherwise, I would have shifted my base and tried something else. A man should always try to have a little money where he can get hold of it in case of need, and keep a dodge or two ahead of his customers, so that if one fails to work he'll have another to bring on."

"But no dodge ought to fail," I put in. "If you have the thing the people want they are bound to buy it; and if they don't want it now, make them want it by the time you get through. That is my idea of the business."

"And a very good one it is; only, sometimes, receipts don't balance expenditures, and then it is about time to quit and try something else. I can talk as well as the next, but I have an occasional failure myself. It looks as though business would last here for several days yet. By that time we

will be pretty well out of sorts, and I've a nice stock of soap coming for the next stand. If you want to try your hand I'll let you do the talking, and see what you can do with it."

The professor was right in his predictions. The ladies who patronized us the first day sent others on the second, and returned themselves on the third. When we left, it was with the good will of the entire community, and no inconsiderable quantity of their coin.

When Professor Carter changed from music and millinery to soap he did not think it at all necessary to change his name at the same time. Indeed, his name was on the packages, and the article he put out was a successful curiosity. By the time we got to work he had drilled me thoroughly on its history and merits.

It was known as Doctor Carter's Peerless Soap-salve. It could be used for either a soap or a salve; the total cost of manufacturing it, without

wrappers, was less than five cents a cake. I know that it sold freely at twenty-five.

We had a little preliminary practice before reaching the town which was to be the scene of operations, and I appeared before the crowd confident in my ability, and anxious to test the glibness of my tongue. The doctor had given me the patter he usually employed, and of course I expected to use it as an outline, subject to alteration as occasion permitted or required. He carried a violin, and it did not take long to draw a crowd.

There was, of course, no haste in getting to the sales. I began by telling what the soap-salve was good for. I gave them a little historical lecture on all soap in general, and this soap in particular. Finally, to illustrate how far a small portion would go, I took a large sponge, which had been passed around for examination. As the doctor handed it to me he concealed in it a cake of soap. From another cake I had made a few shavings, and having poured a little water over the sponge

the amount of lather I made appear from those shavings was a caution; and the crowd was about in shape to appreciate the story I then told, which was about as follows:

"More than that, gentlemen and ladies—for I see there are a few of the latter in the audience, and I wish there were more—I want to tell you how the lives of four hundred people were, on a memorable occasion, saved by this very identical soap.

"I was on a large steamship, on my way to England. Upon a beautiful morning, when the sun had been shining brightly in the heavens, and dancing in great waves over the white-crested billows, peace and harmony and happiness prevailing among the passengers, a sudden and severe wind storm came up. Black clouds overcast the sky, and the wind blew so strong that the huge vessel was tossed about as though a mere toy.

"Every one on board became excited. Women screamed and fainted. Down in the cabin a group

was gathered to pray for safe deliverance from the wrath of the hurricane. We were doomed. In a few moments the vessel ran upon hidden rocks, the boilers exploded, and our ship was on fire.

"There we were, on a burning vessel, stranded upon the rocks, and far, far from shore. Death and a watery grave stared us in the face. Can you imagine our despair?

"No time was to be lost. We must act, and act quickly. The life boats were lowered; but they could not hold all the passengers, so that we had to shift as best we could. I helped the women, and some of the men, into the boats, and then found, to my horror, there was no room for me.

"I picked up my valise, which was filled with this soap, grabbed the gang-plank of the vessel, and jumped into the ocean.

"My valise had no sooner struck the water than the soap began to foam. The bubbles grew, and kept increasing in size until they resembled a

mountain of snow. Would you believe it? Every one of those four hundred heart-broken passengers jumped on that huge lump of lather and floated safely to shore.

"Now, my friends, was not that wonderful? So happy were they all when they landed that they chipped in a dollar each, every man ordering a cake sent to his address as soon as I could receive a fresh supply to replace that lost in their salvation.

"But tonight, my friends, I am not going to charge you a dollar a cake. You have not yet been ship-wrecked, though it is as well for you to prepare. Twenty-five cents is all that I shall ask you, and then you will be ready for the direst extremity and the darkest emergency.

"Now, then, who takes the first cake?"

"You do," shouted a voice from the crowd, and the laugh was on me.

Nevertheless, I accepted the turn so readily, and put it aside so neatly, that it was all the better, since I had the crowd with me. Before the evening was over the stock was sold out slick and clean.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTEMPTIBLE PIANO TUNER—THE BIOGRAPHICAL WRITE-UP FAKE—THE FLATTERED BLACKSMITH.

"There are tricks in all trades but ours," quoted the doctor that night, when he had returned to the hotel.

"And I suppose the reason there are no tricks in our trade is because there is positively no epidermis to hold them. It is trickery and nothing else.

"Nevertheless, there are tricks; and there are other tricks. I have no patience with the others. My principle, as I have already explained, is to always give a man the worth of his money at ordinary, every-day market prices. If an emergency arises when I can't do that I try and see that he receives no damage. The fakir that sells a tooth-wash which will eat the enamel off the first appli-

cation, and crumble the teeth to the gums by the third, deserves to be hung.

"It is a little strange," he added, reflectively, "how some of the gang can talk the senses out of the average individual, and make him see that black is white. I don't approve of such methods, and it rather gratifies me when I see a fakir of that class come to grief.

"I remember once, when I was selling bibles up in Minnesota, I had the extreme pleasure of seeing one of the meanest, most contemptible little scoundrels of the species arrested and brought to justice. On the chance of making a trifling ten dollars for himself he had done more than that much damage, which he did not know how to properly repair, and possibly ruined a six hundred dollar instrument. And he seemed to have been working the scheme right along until he was accidentally caught up by a young lady—upon whom I happened to call, in the midst of the wreck, for

the purpose of introducing my fine line of cottage bibles.

"You understand, I love a fine piano, and have a sneaking regard for an instrument of almost any kind. But this was, or had been, a good one, and the way the fellow temporarily ruined it was this:

"The house stood by itself, with vacant lots on either side. He walked up to the front and knocked. When the young lady came to the door he looked up inquiringly, and then slowly and in a disappointed manner, as though speaking to himself, remarked:

" 'I can't understand it.'

" 'Understand what?' asked the young lady.

"Before answering he consulted a card in his hand, which had some penciling on the back.

" 'Why, I am the traveling tuner of the Mittlebache Piano Company. Yesterday somebody sent an order to me at the hotel to call at number 413, this street. There is no such number, I see; but as

this is 415 I thought I would drop in and see if you were not the lady.'

" 'No, sir; I am not,' was the answer.

" 'By the way, what is the name of your piano?'

" 'Oh, mine is rather an old one. It is called the Wilson.'

" 'You don't say so. I hardly expected to find one of them in this part of the country; but it is the coming instrument. We carry a line of them at our headquarters. Wilson seems to be the one man who has mastered the art of making a piano which improves by age. The instrument ought to be like a violin in that respect, but you know, of course, that the output of the average piano manufacturer is not.'

"While carrying on this conversation he walked into the house, the lady remarking:

" 'I supposed the make was out of the market. I never hear of it now at all, and this is the only one I ever saw.'

" 'Not at all, not at all; Wilson is conservative,

and don't want to put out any more pianos than he can build on honor. I understand he always has orders ahead for a year. I should have thought you would have noticed in the papers the account of the magnificent ones he has lately put in the White House. He don't advertise; he don't have to. No piano manufacturer does until his sales fall off. Ah, yes. One of the early make; but it ought to be a good one, nevertheless.'

"By this time he was on the stool, fingers spread out, and he ran over the scales for a moment, at a great rate, a frown gradually darkening his face.

"'Who in the world tuned this piano?' he asked.

"The lady mentioned the name of the tuner, and added that it was some months since he had done the work.

"'I should think so. It's not in tune even a little bit, and sounds as though there was something wrong inside. Don't you want me to fix it for you? I'll do the tuning for one dollar, and

straighten up everything else for a trifle. I've a little time to spare before dinner, as it don't seem likely that I can find that lady. Only one dollar for the tuning.'

"The colossal cheek of the man, and the low price he named for the work, naturally had their effect, and she looked at him hesitatingly. He turned up his cuffs and asked for a piece of flannel with which to dust off the piano, remarking in a jocular way that he would not charge for doing that.

"Unsuspectingly, the young lady hustled off for the flannel, and while she was out of the room he quickly opened the instrument and slipped in a small, artificial mouse's nest, at the same time snipping a few wires, perhaps doing more damage than he intended. When she returned he was already to show her in what a horrible condition the mice had got her instrument.

"At such a point in the game he usually talked so glibly and smoothly and worked the nerves of

his poor victim up to such a tension that she gladly employed him to renovate the affair, and paid him ten dollars, without question, for the work of an hour or so.

"In this case he failed; first, because the young lady had not been entirely hypnotized; and second, because there was neither mouse, rat, nor roach in their house.

"This fact she knew, and that in the interim her instrument had been tuned. She looked the villain in the face and charged him with the full enormity of his rascally act; whereat, he turned and fled.

"I happened on the scene a few minutes later, and it may be it was my counsel which brought the offender to justice."

Such was the story of the doctor, and he told it with a vim and gusto that made me believe he was in earnest in his denunciation of such a questionable style of faking. I then and there vowed to myself to avoid that class of work; and ever

after kept the vow—except in cases of unavoidable necessity.

The question which presented itself to my mind was, what were we to do next. In spite of what Carter had said about always keeping a stock ahead, it seemed to me he had about reached the end of his resources—in other words, he had sold out all his stock in trade. The pens were exhausted, so was the sheet music, so was the soap. I asked him what he intended to do next.

"Well, you see, my son, I have been out some time, and had thought of winding up the present campaign and taking a run to New York to look up novelties. I have done first rate this fall, and have a pretty good wad to buy with for the winter's work."

"But you can't keep on through the winter, can you?" I asked, thinking the question would be apt to draw him out and increase my store of knowledge.

"The work goes on, but it is of a different kind.

But, as I was going to say, I will stay out a little longer, for the sake of your education; and you will learn that a person in our line of business is not dependent on capital, whether in the shape of money or goods. His brains must be his mainstay and dependence, and the more he knows in the way of general education the better it will be for him. You have a great deal to learn, and if you want to be a success in the field to which you seem to have been called you won't have an idle moment you can call your own. For the remainder of the week I shall proceed to boom and advertise a town. There is good money in it, although it is not every one who is fitted to work the racket. It takes a man of not only good knowledge of human nature, but of wide experience and considerable journalistic ability."

Accordingly, the next day we set off for the town he had selected, and which he assured me had not been worked after the fashion he proposed.

B——. was a thriving little city of three or four thousand inhabitants, which had several newspapers that were fairly well supported. The history of this place Dr. Carter already had at his finger ends, and the names of the prominent citizens were more than familiar. He had already looked the ground over, or had it looked over, I was not certain which. This saved him some little time, though I believe he could have gone in, a perfect stranger to every soul, and still met with as thorough a success. I have done it myself more than once when no more promising field of operations appeared to be open.

Our first business call was upon the editor whom Carter had chosen as his local helper.

He introduced himself as Dr. Carter, of the Eastern Globe, out to write up the country and its resources for his paper, but meantime with an eye open for the profit of himself and friend. To describe his scheme briefly, he proposed to the editor, who was also proprietor, to get out a special num-

ber of the Daily Hornet, in which should be given a write-up of the city and its business men, the doctor to do the soliciting and literary work, and receive his end of the profits.

Country editors are always susceptible to the word profits, since, with few exceptions, I have found them seriously affected with shortness of cash, and ready to turn an honest dollar at any hour of the day or night.

Mr. Mathews, of the Hornet, was no exception. After the doctor (or professor, whichever you choose to call him) had held him under fire of his verbal battery a short time he made unconditional capitulation, and started out with us to make introductions, gather materials, and prepare the way for contracts.

A few moments' observation convinced me that the editor was as great a fakir as ourselves, even though he did not wear the badge on his sleeve.

He introduced Mr. Carter, of the East, as of the editorial staff, detailed to make observations

through the state with a view to a writing-up of its most promising and prominent business men and institutions.

"I have induced him to stop at B——. long enough to give me the assistance of his valuable pen in writing up our city and its noted people, a plan which I have long had in contemplation. I shall get out a special edition of twenty thousand of the number containing the article, and while copies will go all over the state, I shall see that every family in the county is supplied. They will be kept for reference, and I need hardly tell you will be of incalculable value to all parties concerned. We are around interviewing a few of the leading citizens on the subject, and I do not expect to find any difference of opinion as to the importance of the matter."

The very nature of such an approach was enough to give the prospective customer the swelled head. It pleased him that he was recog-

nized as a solid pillar of the town, and he usually took the bait with a smile, and said:

"Certainly, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

With that question the editor retired from action, and Carter stepped to the front. He explained that a country was known better by its people than by its natural advantages, and that one live—really and truly live—business man was worth more to a town than a million dollars in capital. There could not be many in B——., but there were some who were influential and prominent, and he proposed to place their biographies where they would be of public record. Of course, their present host was of the number who would receive early attention.

Mixed in with this, and following it, and all around it, was a running fire of questions as to when the gentleman was born, where raised, what great deeds he had performed, how he served in the war, getting in a brief way his whole life and career from the time he was born until the present

day, as well as the particulars of the business in which he was engaged. All this, of course, without asking for financial support.

Other calls were made of a similar nature—a good many of them, in fact. And then Professor Carter went to his room at the hotel armed with a battery of pens, ink and paper and began to write. He wrote rapidly and in extravagant praise of the business men of B——. The first sketch read something like this:

"Mr. John Smith, the subject of this sketch, was born in Jim Crow township, Boozer county, Indiana, just fifty-six years ago. When only a boy his father died, forcing him to enter active life at a very tender age. His lot was cast with a blacksmith, and he began with indomitable energy to work his way up. Today Mr. Smith is not only one of our leading business men, but has one of the best equipped blacksmith shops in the state, and enjoys the reputation of being the best horse-shoer in the valley of the Mississippi. At the

breaking out of the civil war Mr. Smith enlisted in the ——— Indiana Regiment of Volunteers, taking part with the regiment in seventeen different battles. For an act of bravery, in which he carried the flag under a heavy charge, President Lincoln wrote him a personal letter, commending him for the deed. Mr. Smith is one of the pioneers of this city, having lived here ever since the close of the war, so that his name is a household word in B——. Although Mr. Smith is 56 years old, married happily, and has a large family, prominent in social circles, he is still a young looking man, of most prepossessing appearance, public spirited, a leader of men, and universally recognized as the most prominent and logical candidate for mayor at the ensuing election."

When these articles were written the really serious business of the campaign was at hand. For instance, Carter took this copy to Smith, showed it to him, and read it over for personal correction and approval.

Of course, Smith was pleased.

Doctor Carter tells him he intends to put his engraved picture above the article, and that it is expected the citizens will help out liberally on the enterprise, which not only does justice to them, but will attract attention to the town.

Mr. Smith probably subscribed for fifty copies —twelve dollars and a half—and put up five dollars more, and a photograph, in order that his likeness might grace the pages of the Hornet supplement. If he had been the proprietor of a large mercantile establishment the tariff would most likely have been as much more. Every relative of Mr. John Smith, to the third and fourth generation doubtless received a marked copy of that paper.

Of course, an edition which exceeded the normal output by at least twenty fold was valuable for legitimate advertising, and its space per inch worth a sum which, compared with ordinary numbers, was almost fabulous. Of that fact, Mr.

Matthews no doubt made his account, but with it we had nothing to do. When the last bill for write-ups and "cuts" (on these a profit of two to five hundred per cent. was made) had been collected to the uttermost farthing, the doctor professed himself as satisfied, and prepared to move out in search of "fresh fields and pastures green."

And now the hour of our parting was at hand, and I was to find myself once more adrift, though this time more ready and capable to take up the battle and fight for a fortune.

CHAPTER V.

FAKIR MAXIMS—A HAPPY MEETING—AUCTION BUSINESS—TALK AND AUCTION GAGS—THE BOY AUCTIONEER—PARTING WITH PROF. CARTER.

Before we separated the doctor gave me some parting words of admonition.

"My son," he said, beaming on me in a proud and happy way—for were not his pockets filled to bursting with the result of the raid on B——.? "it is dead easy to work the public if you have confidence in yourself, and a thorough understanding of the people with whom you deal.

"I have been in the business a good many years, and I know whereof I speak. You will have your downs as well as ups, since you are a young man, and cannot always gauge the amount of strength needed, or know the exact nature of the forces which must be brought to bear. You will probably

be beaten sometimes, and busted often; but under every circumstance, never despair. You were put here to make a living, and if you don't succeed it is your own fault. I have given you an insight into different branches of fakirdom; cultivate the rest after the same fashion. They are all alike, and founded on the same general principles. These monitions heed:

"Never carry an old sample case. It looks bad and hurts your business.

"Put your whole heart and soul into business, and 'stick to your knitting.'

"A good argument for one thing answers as well for another. Don't forget it.

"Get to the level of your customer, but remain a gentleman.

"Flatter the young woman of the house. If you have her, you've got the mother; and nine times out of ten the gray mare is the better horse.

"It is much easier to bamboozle a woman than

a man, but the profits are apt to be less. Too much time is wasted, and time is money.

"Don't make a second call, unless you have time to burn. Stay with a man as long as there is hope, and then leave him for some one else to warm over. If he wants you he'll send for you; if he don't, he's thought of a dozen arguments against you he didn't advance before.

"One gift to the wife or daughter of a landlord is worth more to secure attention than tips to a dozen waiters.

"There is nothing will do you more good than church going. If it don't happen to save your soul it will surely help your pockets.

"Hold your own. If you take a little of some people's mouths they will think you a fool, and give you a great deal more.

"A trunk and a bank account are both evidences of responsibility, even if the one is empty and the other is small. If you can't conquer both, carry a trunk, anyhow.

"A few good names at the top of a list brings Tom, Dick and Harry at the tail; but if you begin with Tom, Dick and Harry, the list will be all tail, and a short one at that.

"There's a fortune in a new fake, but it won't work in the same community twice; and two of a kind coming close together make a bad pair.

"If, when you are hard up, you think of a scheme which seems likely, try it. You have nothing to lose and everything to win. If you waste time trying to decide, or to think of something better, the golden moment may slip by."

Such maxims he poured forth for my future guidance. He then told me he was going to Chicago to prepare for the further work, asked me to keep him advised where a letter would reach me, and promising to post me in regard to any novelties in the market. After some other talk about our hopes and intentions he left me. It was long before I saw him again.

I confess I felt a trifle lonely, and at a loss what to do with myself. I had plenty of money for present needs, and a little capital with which I could purchase a small stock of something to sell; but I did not at the moment know what I wanted or which way to turn, and the doctor had offered no suggestions. It was an understood matter that I was to at least try to hoe my own row.

I lounged down to the station, and while staring aimlessly after a departing train was surprised to hear my own name called and have some one slap me on the back.

I looked around quickly, and lo, it was my old friend, the lightning rod man.

We shook hands heartily, while I expressed my surprise at seeing him, and curiosity to know how he came to be here, when I supposed he was at Davenport, and hardly able to hobble out of the hospital.

He explained it in short order. The broken bones had knit very nicely and rapidly. He was

now on his way to a neighboring city to look after a small stock of goods for which, some six months before, he had traded a patent right. The goods were not worth much, but neither was the patent, and he thought that by taking them out of storage he could realize expenses and enough to keep him afloat until he was entirely ready once more for business.

"What sort of goods are they?" I asked, at once alive to the possibility which might lurk behind the name.

"Notions and ready-made clothing," he answered. "I believe there is some good stuff in it, too; but the whole lot is out of date, and part of it damaged."

"All right; I'll go along with you and help you. Just now I've nothing to do."

"But what have you been doing, and how are you off for coin? You have hardly made a fortune in soap-foam signs."

I explained briefly then, and afterwards at greater length.

We took the train together that evening, and I told him my little experiences since we parted. The next day we hunted up the stock, which he told me had been valued as low as nine hundred dollars, but which, when opened out, made quite a respectable showing. We also rented a large, vacant store room. I told him the people didn't know me, and consequently would not know the goods, and I was confident there could be good money made selling them off at auction. As he had very little money, I advanced what was necessary, and proposed to act as auctioneer myself.

"All right," he answered, "let it go at that. If we make even a couple of hundred dollars out of it I will be satisfied—so it is cash.

"If we can sell anything at all we surely can get that," I assured him.

Mr. Carlysle was a trifle dubious about my abilities, but my late little experiences had helped

me wonderfully, and given me thorough confidence. I thought, moreover, of a dodge which, no matter what the line, has always worked. I assumed as youthful an appearance as possible and he had me advertised all over town as "The boy auctioneer." That brought the people out in swarms, and when I saw the crowd we had succeeded in gathering I knew we had 'em. Carlysle had given me a thorough coaching in private, and I felt that there was no danger of being at a loss for something to say. When I began I confess I was a trifle nervous from stage fright, but after selling a few minor articles I was all right and ready to start in full swing. If there is anything the boy from a farm has heard it is the patter of an auctioneer. I had listened to it a hundred times, and I went on something like this:

"Gentlemen, you all know I am no resident merchant, and before I get fairly into this sale I wish to make an explanation.

"I traded for this stock of goods, and under the

circumstances it is a white elephant on my hands. The quicker I get rid of it the better off I will be. When I say I am going to close out this stock regardless of cost or value I mean it, I positively mean it.

"The first thing I shall put up will be a fine, custom-made suit of clothing. Mr. Carlysle, will you please hand me up the very best suit you can find in the lot."

Mr. Carlysle, after looking around a moment, passed up the suit already agreed on.

"Now, gentlemen, here is a nice, black, custom-made suit of clothes that cost twenty-six dollars, direct from the manufacturer. If you will look carefully at the price marked on the collar you will see it was intended to sell at thirty-five. How much am I offered as a starter? How much, gentlemen? Make a bid. I don't care how much or how little. Your price is my price, and whatever you say goes.

"Will you give twenty dollars?"

"No; will you give ten dollars? Five dollars? No? Two dollars? Not even two dollars Well, then, who'll offer me one dollar?

"Ah, thank you, sir. Now, there is a man with a level head.

"I don't like to start a thirty-five dollar suit of clothes for one dollar, but I'll do it, just the same, and here goes.

"One dollar I'm offered, one dollar, one dollar; who'll make it two?

"Thank you, sir. Two dollars, two dollars, two dollars I have; who'll make it three?

"Three dollars I have; who is generous enough to bring it up to four?

"Yes; there is a smart man over yonder, who knows a good thing when he sees it. Four dollars I have, at four, at four, at four; who'll make it five? who'll make it five?

"Remember, gentlemen, this is a genuine, all-wool, imported English worsted, that cost twenty-six dollars, and was price-marked thirty-five. We

guarantee a fit if you are near the size, or refund the money. Do I hear the five? Will you give the five. Who'll say the five? Will you make the five, at four, at four, at four and going, going—going at four. At four, at four, at four—did I head the five? Holy smoke. What's the matter with this town? Do you want a man to stand up here and yell his lungs out for a dollar? Why, I'm twenty-two dollars in the hole, now, as it stands. Do you expect me to get up here and sell you twenty dollar gold pieces for the small sum of ten cents?

"It's a crying shame for you to stand here and let a thirty-five dollar suit of clothes go for four dollars. Why, it's worth more than that for an every-day, knock-around business outfit, to say nothing of the fact that it's all right for dress occasions. What, four fifty do I hear? No, sir; I don't take a half dollar bid at this stage of the proceedings. If you'll raise it fifty cents I'll cry

your bid. All right. Thank you, sir. Five I have; now, who'll give me six?

"Look here gentlemen, I am willing to sacrifice the stock, but I hate to be compelled to actually give it away. Why, it would be a shame to the town to sell a suit like that for five dollars. Some of you fellows down there, with ruffles on your pants, can't you make it six? And if you're not satisfied after wearing it five years come back and I'll make you a present of one hundred dollars.

"I can't dwell all day on a single article; so, be lively with your bids, or I'll knock it down before you can wink. At five, at five, at five, at five, at five, at five—will you give me the six?

"No? Five once, five twice, five, third and last go—did I hear the six?

"At last. Just in time; so, six I have; at six, at six, at six. Come along with your little bids now. I hear six and a half. Who'll make it seven? I tell you, gentlemen, in after years this sacrifice may cause me to shed many a bitter tear, but like

the great majority it has got to go, unless some fair-minded person makes it seven. Six fifty? Six fifty? Will no one raise it fifty? Six dollars fifty, once. Six dollars fifty, twice. Six fifty, third and last call, and sold—to that gentleman there under the gas light, and a mighty good bargain."

This was a good sale all around, and after this suit was sold I felt more than ever confident, and was ready for whatever came next. I went on:

"Now, then, gentlemen, don't be impatient. There is plenty more clothing, but I really must protect my own interests a little bit. When I said I was going to sell this stock regardless of cost or value I didn't mean I would give away the picked lots and throw in a chromo to have you take them. I know, when you get your eyes open, you'll meet me half way; and here is an eye-opener, and the expense will neither make nor break you.

"Here is a job lot of combs, coarse combs, fine

combs, horse combs, honey combs and the comb of a roof; we'll take this fine tooth comb first.

"Here it is, gentlemen, already for business, white as the driven snow, and with two rows of teeth as sharp as the edge of a fine razor. I will guarantee it to catch 'em every time, dead or alive. It's a sure winner, a double-geared, switch-back combination, that will work either forward or backward, without a single kick. It is hand-turned, double-soled, and made from genuine ivory, worth four hundred dollars a pound, and a good day for elephants at that. How much do I hear to start it? Will you give me a quarter? No? Will you give me a dime? No? Do I hear any one whisper the ridiculous small sum of a nickel? What! Don't shake your heads side-ways; always shake them up and down.

"Hurry up your bids, gentlemen. Tempus Fugit, as the astronomer says. Time flies. Yes, time flies; and so do the little vermin this comb is warranted to lay low. Will no one give me a bid?

I never saw a lousy man buy a comb in my life. You needn't be ashamed. You won't find a sale on record, from the time Noah made a clearing sale on closing business at the ark, where the purchaser needed the article for his own use. Slip it in the package the next time you want to send some books to a starving cripple who has just lost his spectacles, and when you are nosing around for something to put in the contribution box for the poor, benighted heathen, think how handy it would be to have it in the house. Does nobody say five cents? Third and last call at—thank you. You'll take it. Sold at five cents. You're a clear-headed man for sure, and I hope there is more in the crowd."

There was a laugh at this, and I began to feel more confident than ever. I kept on at the combs until I had sold the entire assortment. By and by I opened a watch.

The crowd was willing, but slow to start. Each man wanted to take time to consider the outside

figure he was willing to pay for the article, provided he had the least thought of purchasing. I was satisfied to let the customer have plenty of time, because he might make a bid, even if it was within the figure he placed as the top notch. If he once began bidding, such a limit would cut no ice at all. After some preliminary remarks I shouted at the top of my voice:

"Under or over the top of God's green earth I never saw the like before. You stand perpetually blind to your own interests, and wait for the other fellow to get the bargain. When I offer you a fifty dollar watch I can't even get a four dollar bid on it, and still you wonder why you are poor.

"Now, gentlemen, remember that this is a fact, a tried, tested and practical fact. Everywhere in this generation, the human mind is busier than ever in extending its prerogatives. If you don't believe me turn to the ninth chapter of Isaiah and read the twenty-fourth verse where it says, 'It is easier for an elephant to walk through the eye of

a needle than a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

"The physical necessity of mental activity in every practical sense confers upon the mind the power of determining the actual strength of longevity. So, prepare yourselves, gentlemen, for one of the most startling revelations yet to come. We are living in times when people know what goods are. To keep abreast with them we must organize and increase our capacity to thirty million times its natural strength and power.

"To illustrate, look back along the ages and see that poor man there, bending over the stone mortar, pulverizing the fluidy grains into a more minute form. Watch him. See. He stops and gazes at yonder precipitous torrent thundering down a rocky channel in its course. There, a thought has struck him. He begins to whistle, and then to whittle, for he learned to whistle soon after he learned to breathe.

"His hands are clumsy, but brains furnish skill,

and practice makes perfect. He gears together a dozen wooden wheels, some horizontal, some perpendicular, and makes a mortar, such as he had never seen before that moment of inspiration. He turns on the water. The wheel revolves. The mortar grinds, and out rolls the meal in a golden stream, while he claps his hands in triumph, and thinks what the machine would do if it were a thousand times stronger.

"Therefore, remember, gentlemen, I am not conscientiously, virtuously, righteously nor religiously, but just good naturedly, giving these goods away.

"Here is this watch, now; a fine Elgin, with a twenty-year case set in two plates of gold, adjusted to both heat and cold, with economical hair spring, regulated by sun, moon and stars, and it will even tell you the price of cheese in Canada. I'm not going to force you to take it at this moment, and as no one seems ready to make a decent bid I'll lay it by until the gang gets in from the

railroad, and switch off on to this elegant suit of underwear.

"How much am I offered to start it, the choice with the privilege? Remember, these garments are all wool, through and through, double-hitched and double-stitched, ribbed up and down, as perfectly seamless as the leg of a woman's stocking, and guaranteed to live three years without washing. The winter days are fast coming on, when underwear will be more precious than diamonds, and the tariff will send prices up a-booming. Take a pair of these drawers home, and after wearing them all winter you can sneak around to some dressmaker in the spring, and she can fix them so the old woman can wear them next summer. Now, don't all bid at once. Yes, yes, I'm listening. That's right. Keep it up. You can't all have this one pair, and they go to that man over there, cheap as dirt and good as gold. Here's another suit. Shall we start them where the other left off —and who speaks first?"

The second set went higher than the first, and there was no trouble to close out the entire line, for the articles were good lookers and, as I had told them, the season was coming when they would be needed. The watch went later on at a very good price, and, in fact, the entire stock of stuff rattled off like hot cakes, whilst I succeeded in keeping the crowd in good buying humor to the very last. It took several weeks to finish up the job, but when the hammer came down for the last time I had cleaned out everything, even to the empty boxes, and Carlysle had in his pocket several hundred dollars. I received a hundred for my labors, and might have had more, but I did not care to rob a man who had been my friend and had risked my gaining experience and confidence at his expense. We got out of the place together, but I dropped off the train at the next considerable city and, like Alexander, looked around for more worlds to conquer.

CHAPTER VI.

GETTING A KNOWLEDGE OF SCHEME GOODS—FRIGHTENING THE LADIES—TRICK AT CHURCH FAIR—STREET WORK—THE CATCHY LITTLE LOOKBACKS—GIVING THEM AWAY—THE HORSE AND LOAF OF BREAD TRICK—HANDLING MICROSCOPES.

I now had capital enough to purchase a stock of goods and to embark in the business of traveling salesman and fakir after the most approved fashion.

Unfortunately, perhaps, I had no such stock to my hand, and as yet not sufficiently versed in the ways of the trade to know exactly what I wanted, or where to get it. At present I was inclined to wait until I could hear from Dr. Carter before making any investment. I was willing to trust to his judgment, rather than to anyone else, as to

what would be a swift selling novelty, and how to handle it.

Later on I was seldom thus at fault.

There are thousands of firms throughout the country which transact their business exclusively through agents. Many of them make a specialty of fakirs' goods, and are always on the lookout for something new. They get all the novelties, as fast as they come out, and bring them before the public by advertising.

I afterwards watched the want columns of all the newspapers, and wrote to different firms for their catalogues. I did not patronize every firm, but by thus getting in touch with them I was able to keep posted on everything new in the market, and thereby make a selection of the best.

Of this course I had some idea, having been posted by the professor; but as yet had not had time to put it in practice. However, I did not intend to remain idle in the interim. Time was money, and I could not afford to squander either. I

looked over the city in a hurry, and began to feel almost ashamed. Here was a whole day almost gone, and I had done nothing. I might hear from the doctor as early as the following day, but that was not tonight. What was I to do with myself? Perhaps the hours were not so nearly lost as I imagined, but I certainly felt uneasy. Not being able to find work, work found me.

It so happened that the good women of the Baptist church had a fair going on in the town hall, the proceeds to go for new furniture for the parsonage, their young minister having been lately married. This was the last night, and they had a number of articles on hand which it was proposed to auction off. Among them was a large cake, beautifully frosted and decorated, which they had believed would bring them good money.

Unfortunately, at the last moment, word came that the auctioneer could not be present.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish. It is not every

one who can play the auctioneer, and the crowd had been counting on having as much amusement as profit out of this closing sale.

I heard the members anxiously whispering among themselves, with many ahs and plenty of ohs, and to listen to them one would suppose that the whole church outfit was on the verge of ruin. Though my native modesty would have kept me out of the ring, I could not stand the sight of their tribulation, and came to the front with a smile, offering my services in as bland and genteel a manner as I was capable of assuming.

I was a stranger to them all, except so far as I had made a few friends that evening through some liberal patronage at a few of the various stands, but after looking me over they must have decided there was something in my appearance quite in my favor. They promptly accepted my services, and I took a place on the stand without hesitation. A man who had lately cleaned out such an old stock of goods as I had done would

hardly have much fear of tackling a prize cake at a church festival.

Pushing up my cuffs I began:

"Ladies and gentlemen: It is hardly necessary to remark that I am a stranger within your gates, and a very strange stranger at that. I want to tell you that you have a very fine little city—the greatest one, in fact, I ever saw—especially for a man who is about down to bed-rock. When I landed here this morning I was expecting remittances. I had just ten cents in my pocket, and was hungry as a bear. Yes, sirs and madames, I was just awfully hungry. I do believe if I had found a map of the world at that moment I could have eaten the Sandwich Islands.

"But listen. I went into a restaurant and, walking up to the waiter, said, 'See here, my man, what do you charge for chickens?' 'Two dollars apiece,' he replied. 'What do you charge for eggs and bread and butter?' I asked. 'Four eggs for a dime and the rest thrown in,' was his answer.

'Give me the four eggs,' said I; and would you believe it, the first egg I opened I found a chicken. There I was, one dollar and ninety cents ahead on the first clatter.

"Then I went around to a hotel to put up for the day, and I hadn't more than registered when the strangest thing happened you ever heard of. All the victuals in the kitchen got into an argument. There was a piece of chicken on the shelf and it saw the Worcestershire sauce at the other end. Turning to the salt it said, 'Will you please pass me that bottle of liniment, I've got the rheumatism;' and that started the biggest kind of a fight. It was a regular rough and tumble affair, in which everybody took a hand except the syrup —that was too stuck up. The coffee was weak, and made a poor showing, but the sugar was rather sweet on it and turned in to help it out. The vinegar looked on with a sour, sarcastic air. without interfering, and the pepper was so bitter at the whole crowd it just urged them all to fight

the harder. The butter thought it was pretty strong and pitched in for a little fun, but they soon melted it. The cook stove, which was nursing a fire, watched the fight from its door, and was beginning to get pretty warm. The longer it looked at them the hotter it grew, until it couldn't stand it any more and began to yell for the police. Oh, it was terrible. The cabbage came out with a swelled head, the potatoes were all mashed to pieces, the chicken got an awful roast, and there is no telling where the thing would have ended if a big Irish policeman had not just then appeared on the scene. I slipped out while he was attending to the fighters, and, going to the postoffice, found, thank heaven, that my remittances had arrived and for that reason I was able to do my whole duty tonight in patronizing this estimable institution.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I appear before you in the capacity of auctioneer for this magnificent, double-decked, thoroughbred, high-stepping,

copper-bottomed, fast-sailing, number one church cake, warranted not to pinch in the armholes, pull apart in the seams, or show the stains of grease, gravy, petroleum or lard oil. One bite of this cake is a revelation, and two insures a dream."

After going on this way I asked for bids, but no one would say a word or start the cake. They seemed to be backward about speaking. At last I said: "You all know, in selling goods at auction, that it is customary to take winks for a bid, but perhaps that won't do in this case. No, a wink won't do, but I'll tell you what will, and that is, a smile. If you don't care to wink, or talk, just look at me and smile and I'll catch the meaning all the same."

Naturally, this puckered the majority of mouths for a smile at the very outset, and beginning that cake at one dollar, two dollars, three dollars, four dollars, etc., I ran it rapidly up to sixty dollars. I kept up a running fire of jokes, and every time I caught a smile on a pair of lips I

would yell an extra dollar bid. Then I said: 'Sixty dollars, last call. Once, twice, three times, sold to —' I got that far, but in the rush which followed my voice could not possibly have been heard. The way those women scattered was a sight to see.

They were frightened, because every one had smiled at some part or other of the harangue, and there was great fear I had accepted that smile for a bid and would compel some one of them to take that cake. So they fled, pell-mell, to the different corners of the hall, and I was much afraid they would never stop until they had reached home.

When, however, peace was restored, I explained that it was all a joke, and they came back with such looks of relief on their faces that I had to laugh myself. The cake was offered a second time, and finally knocked down to a bona fide purchaser at ten dollars and twenty cents. Amid much cheering I retired from the stand, the hero of the hour.

If there was no immediate profit in this, there was pleasure and practice, and I went to my hotel tolerably well satisfied with the way I had spent the evening. The next day, as I had hoped, I heard from the doctor.

He told me in his letter that he had forwarded me a supply of the Goldentine Pens, and several other articles which he thought I could manage. He also gave an outline of the way he thought they could best be handled; and after looking the articles over I determined to follow his suggestions, adding some amendments of my own. As the business at the church fair had given me some little reputation, I thought I could not do better than begin operations that very evening.

Since then, when engaged in street faking, I have generally had with me a musical assistant or two. Nothing will draw a crowd quicker than a few vigorous plunks on a banjo, or the squeak of a fiddle played "well up in G." Not having such

an assistant, I was fortunate enough to be able to secure some local talent.

After a little music I stood up, made by bow, and gave about the following harangue:

"Gentlemen, with your kind permission, I will entertain you for a few moments with a few tricks in legerdemain. I am a stranger in your place and hope to show you strange things. India is supposed to be the land of magic and the home of the conjuror, but India itself has never invented anything equal to that which I propose to do before your astonished eyes tonight. The first trick is one of my own invention, and one which no other man in the world than myself has ever successfully performed.

"Five years ago I offered one thousand dollars to any man who could do it, and tonight I will double the offer. I will give two thousand dollars in cold cash to the individual who will do the trick, and grant him full privilege to watch me while I am working.

"What is this wonderful feat? I will tell you, gentlemen. I propose to take a loaf of bread, a common, every-day loaf of bread, and right here, before your very eyes, turn it into a horse, a real, prancing, living, breathing horse.

"I was at Newton the other night, and while preparing to do the trick a man in the audience interrupted me by saying to one of his friends, 'Bill, I know how he does it. He's got that horse up his sleeve.'

"Now, in order to convince my audience that there was no truth in the explanation, I shall, while doing this feat, take off my coat and roll up my shirt sleeves. This certainly ought to be enough to convince the most skeptical.

"I have just sent for a loaf of bread," (after a few whispered words the "local" musician had suddenly taken his departure) "and while the young man is gone, allow me to talk for a few moments concerning a little article I have with me

here, an article by the assistance of which, in reality, I do some of my most singular feats.

"Understand, gentlemen, I am not going to sell these articles, but intend to give them away to those fortunate individuals who apply before the limited supply is exhausted.

"The instrument is known as the Microscopic Look-Back, and was an original invention of my own while I was on the detective police force. The only reason why I don't sell them is because the law forbids me doing so. But, my friends, in this great and glorious land of ours, which lies under the stars and stripes, where every man is free and endowed with certain inalienable rights, there is no law which can stop my giving them away.

"I can the better explain to you the benefits of this little instrument by giving some practical illustrations of its use."

While putting up this talk I would be holding in my hands the neat little box with its internal mirror, and now I would place it to my eye.

"I will ask some gentleman back of me to do something. With the aid of this instrument I will tell him what he did. Somebody behind me, please do something.

"Ah, there is a gentleman raising his right hand. He now lowers it and raises his left. He now closes his first two fingers, and is laughing.

"There on his right is another gentleman who is raising his hat. He is putting it on again."

I would go on like this for perhaps five minutes, the actions of the persons behind me increasing in interest and complexity; then I would continue:

"Now, gentlemen, this little instrument, as you may imagine, can be used in a great many different ways besides seeing through the back of your head.

"You might wish to follow some one without being seen. If the object of your chase should turn a block ahead, you would not have to follow. You could simply stand on the corner, hold your little box back at an angle of about twenty degrees

—in this manner—and it would bring every object on that street to your eyes.

"If you are suspicious of your best girl, and want to watch the other fellow while he calls on her, don't sneak up to the house and peep through the window. Take your little Look-Back, place this end to the keyhole and your eye at the other and the entire surroundings will be disclosed.

"The little box which you see in my hands has within it such a combination of lenses and glasses, all arranged in such a scientific way, that they throw a picture of objects to the center of the box, where they are exposed to the eye.

"If you want to watch an eclipse you can do so with this little Look-Back; and if you want to sight the smallest thing at the longest distance, there you have it. And, by the way, if you want to gaze on the smiling countenance of your best girl without using the keyhole, or being seen, just place yourself directly under her window, use this

little instrument, and I don't care if she lives forty stories high you can spot her every time.

"The bad boy got hold of one of these and discovered a new use for it. He looked through the wrong end at a lamp post, and found that it turned the post upside down. Would you believe it, gentlemen, after that he stood on the street corner, gazing at the passers-by, and had every man, woman and child walking upside down.

"Of course, I don't want any of you to do the same thing, because it would be unfair and wouldn't be nice.

"Now, before I begin to hand them out, I wish to show you an article that is related to the Look-Back, and, in fact, goes with it. It is a microscope —not like the ordinary ones, but one that magnifies one hundred thousand times larger, according to its size and power, than anything that has ever been discovered. It is something every man should own, from the fact that he can make it pay for itself a thousand times over.

"In buying your groceries, for instance, you can discover any and all adulterations by its aid. The same with the water which you drink—any impurities in it can be easily seen.

"If you buy a suit of clothes, the microscope comes in handy again, for by its aid you can find out whether your clothes are all wool, or mixed with cotton. If you need a sunglass, or want to do anything which requires an acuteness of sight beyond the limit of the human eye, you can be assisted by the microscope.

"There are a thousand and one other uses for this little instrument, but you all know what it is and it is needless for me to go into any further statement of its merits.

"I wish to explain that I am here to introduce these microscopes, and that I have orders to place them with every drug and jewelry store in your city. The price will be from two to three dollars, and if you wish them after I am gone you can get them from your local dealers at those figures.

"I am going to sell them tonight, however, for the purpose of introduction, and for the small sum of twenty-five cents; and with every microscope that is sold I will give one of these valuable Look-Backs, free of charge. The first man who passes me up a quarter gets a pair of these valuable articles. Thank you, sir; you break the ice, and for the rest of your life you will be thanking me."

The quarters began to roll in, and my local talent was kept busy in helping me keep track of the people in the crowd who wanted to be customers. They had already helped me out in "looking backward," but the musician I had sent for a loaf of bread must have forgotten me, since he never returned. Of course, I never actually attempted to do the trick, but used the patter to interest the crowd, and if asked for it would make some comical excuse which would raise a laugh.

The "Look-Backs" cost me fifty cents per dozen and the microscopes fifty-eight.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MUSEUM SCHEME AND THE SIX WIDOWS —TRAVELING WITHOUT PAYING RAILROAD FARE —LIVING ON FREE LUNCHES—AT A LOW EBB— THE ANIMATED CHOCOLATE DROP — OLD AUNTIE FROM SMOKY ROW—THE CORN DOCTOR—THE EXCITED MOB—NOT ONLY BROKE, BUT DEAD-BROKE—THE LETTER FROM HOME— GETTING OUT OF TOWN.

Of course, it would take up too much time to tell of all my wanderings and my numerous ups and downs. My idea is not to give more than one experience with any particular line of business, and in that show just how I worked, and indicate about what was my percentage of profit.

I worked off the stock of goods sent me C. O. D. by my friend, the professor, bought a number of other stocks on my own account, and covered considerable territory. If my success was great,

however, my personal expenses were large. I was not naturally an extravagant man, had not very well remembered the lessons of economy, and wealth did not accumulate in my hands as rapidly as the reader might suppose.

One morning I woke up with nothing special on my hands, and just three hundred dollars in my pockets. Impelled by what was probably a whim to start in some permanent business, I went to the town of Marshall, Georgia, on a prospecting tour. I saw no opening there which impressed me favorably, until, while I was waiting undecided what to do, I met the manager of a theatrical company which had just stranded in a neighboring city.

After a little conversation, an idea struck me, which I immediately carried into effect. I made my arrangements with the manager for himself and the six female members of the company, giving the gentleman enough money to get out of town. I rented a large hall, and opened it up as an original museum. We put the six ladies on

exhibition as the principal and, in fact, the only attraction, advertising them as six beautiful widows in search of husbands.

Each exhibition was interspersed with little orations, in which we gave the ages and pedigrees of the different ladies, together with the amount of cash each one had in her own right. Every eligible single gentleman was entitled to registration by name or number—or by both—as a candidate for the hand of the lady he might select, and we started in with the number something like 22,911. The choice of the lady was to be made at the end of the season.

The widows looked very charming in their fancy full dress costumes, and did several dignified "turns" in singing and legitimate theatricals, proving a great drawing card with the sterner sex. For a while the dimes and quarters came rolling in pretty fast, but eventually the novelty began to wear off and the audiences thinned out, so that I decided to shift my field of operations.

My expenses had really been heavier than I knew. The manager gambled and lost a great deal of our capital; the various widows had divided up into pairs, each jealous of the others. The brightest lady of the troupe fell sick of a fever, the most beautiful one eloped with a worthless actor, one was really married to a planter residing in the neighborhood of Marshall, who bravely followed her up and cut her out from under my very nose, and two more "silently stole away" the very night of the walking of the ghost, leaving me with just a remnant of one charming widow on my hands.

Fearful lest I might be led into the only apparently legitimate outcome, that of marrying the unexpended balance, I left that lady the entire remnant of my fortune, amounting in all to about forty dollars, only reserving enough to get me out of town, and then ran away myself. It had taken about four months to find out that, though my ideas might be both original and good, I was not

cut out for a successful museum manager. I quit the business a sadder and wiser man.

At that time the business of securing "free transportation" had not been brought down to the present fine point. Perhaps one reason was that most any person with a plausible excuse and the gall to apply could secure a pass from New Orleans to Halifax.

In my hours of prosperity, of course, I paid my fare over the railroads, the same as any other millionaire; when stranded I only walked when it was impossible to ride.

There was no special ingenuity displayed in beating the railroad, as long as my baggage had been forwarded by express, and I was not fastidious about my surroundings. Of course, there was a strong probability of being "ditched" before reaching destination, but that was part of the game. Occasionally I borrowed a box-car or rode the "blind baggage." In moments of dark adversity, I was ready to try a brake beam or find a

hiding place in the back part of the tender. I have ridden on top of a passenger coach, in the manger of a palace horse car, and even taken a flyer on the pilot of an express train. Once, when I was hard up and it was of vital importance for me to reach a town where a prepaid package of goods was awaiting me, I boldly went into a smoking car where there were four men sitting in seats facing each other. They had been traveling for some time and were going a long distance. The conductor had stuck his checks in the bands of their hats, and was not likely to pay them more than passing attention. As I entered, one of them got up and went out. I immediately dropped into his seat, and, taking off my hat, was busily engaged reading a newspaper when the conductor came around. Nine times out of ten this risky plan would have been a failure, but my lucky star happened to be in the ascendant, the conductor mistook me for the other fellow and passed me by. Before he noticed it I had reached my destination.

I tried no such scheme as this at Marshall, however. I simply went out on the blind baggage. There may, indeed, have been a door in the front end—in those days there generally was—but, if so, it made no difference. I sat on the steps of the first platform and evaded the lynx-eyed glances of the captain.

Just how I got to Mobile I'll never tell you, but get there I did, and it took me several weeks to do so.

At that moment I was almost ready to forswear my occupation and settle down into the permanent and legitimate; but, alas, no opening presented itself, and I was forced to fall back on my wits. Luck had for some time been dead against me, and several promising schemes failed to work. I suppose I did not put soul enough into them. I had been living on free lunches longer than I cared to remember, and was growing desperate.

There was certainly game afoot somewhere, if I could only find it, and I strolled down, at last, to

a part of the city where the colored population was largely concentrated. There I caught sight of an immense colored woman, and at once evolved a scheme. I went over, did some lively talking, and in the end struck up a bargain. There were a few dimes yet in my pocket, which I spent for muslin and the hire of a hack to bring her up in triumph to an empty store-room which I had hired without permission.

I have already alluded to my knack of sign making and lettering. For a few pennies I procured the loan of a paint pot, and fell to work on a gigantic banner for a place on the outer wall. It ran like this:

"The Animated Chocolate Drop!"
See the Curiosity of the Age!
This Is
The Biggest, Blackest, Ugliest
Thing You Ever Saw.
Living, Breathing, Seeing, Speaking,
Chunk of
5,000 Pounds.
One Sight Will Be a Joy for a Lifetime!
Walk In.

With this I covered the bay window on the outside, thus making it serve the double purpose of advertisement and curtain. Then, taking my stand at the door, I fell to work.

A good many people were passing that way, and with my knowledge of human nature it was not hard to pick out half a dozen of the right sort for free admission. Securing these as a start for an audience, I began my outside oration on the animated chocolate drop, the mountain of flesh, the visible evolution of the protoplastic through the missing link of Darwin's chain. I talked of the baboons of Sumatra and the Dyaks of Borneo; of the chimpanzee of Abyssinian deserts and the gorrilla of the Congo— "And all this lesson to be learned for the small sum of half a dime. The lecture itself is worth the money, and the sight of the chocolate drop would be cheap at a fortune."

What my audience thought I never knew nor cared, so long as they did not mob me. It is an

actual fact that over two hundred people paid a nickel a piece to see the wonder of the age—which was only old "auntie" from Smoky Row, throned on the counter and feeling as big as a box-car. After deducting expenses I divided fairly with the old woman, sending her home again in a hack, while I proceeded to leave the neighborhood as soon as possible, before the questions of rent or trespass and license should come up. It seemed a miracle that I had not been stranded on one of them.

But here I was, after the briefest of business adventures, with five dollars in my pocket, and again at a loss. That evening I once more ran over the list of my available accomplishments, to see which one was most applicable, and happened to think of one which had been escaping my mind. What was to prevent my pursuing the vocation of a corn doctor?

True enough, my knowledge was theoretical rather than practical, having been gleaned from a

few incidental remarks made by Professor Carter; but I thought I remembered all he had said on the subject, and was sure that anything more would be confusing. I decided to launch out the next morning and test for myself the possibilities of the profession.

In the outset, I may as well premise that as a corn doctor I was a miserable failure, and after the first day's experience never had the nerve to attempt the scheme again. I had none too much confidence in the start, and before the day's work was done had mentally vowed that the corn doctor was the most worthless piece of mechanism ever manufactured.

The day bid fair to be blazing hot, and the chances were that before getting through I would be hotter. I went along, trying to muster up courage, and laughing at myself for a cowardice which I had never felt since breaking the ice with calling cards. What troubled me was the fact that my inexperienced hand would most likely be

employed, if at all, on the corns and bunions of the sweeter sex, and I felt shy of presenting myself as a spectacle for their roguish or discriminating eyes. Door after door I passed, and at each one my courage failed me and I went on with a muttered "not yet."

"This will never do," I said to myself at length.

"At the fifth house from this I stop and begin work. Rich or poor, young or old, high or low, no matter what state or condition of men, women or children I may meet with, I intend to extract their corns, eradicate their bunions, and obtain the full market price for my services."

The fifth house was a neat cottage and the name of Higbie was on the door. I rang the bell and a young lady appeared at the threshold.

Good heavens! If it had been her grandmother the case would have been bad enough, but I confess the sight of this beautiful young lady, with the big blue eyes and the lovely golden hair, frizzled all over her head in some bewildering man-

ner, broke my nerve at the very outset. I felt an immediate desire to ask for a glass of water, but remembered that I had exhausted that racket in my Chicago experience, and came to business as well as I could.

The longer I thought of those wide blue eyes which were on me, the more confused and excited I became, and the less inclined I felt to break the ice, though I knew it had to be done in some way. When, at length, in a very sweet voice, she asked what I wanted, I blurted out:

"Do you want to buy any corns today? Ah—oh, no—I don't mean that. I wanted to ask if you had any corns in here. That is—are you—no—so to speak—I am a corn doctor, selling corns, bunions and ingrowing toe nails. I have only a few more left of the same sort, and I am disposing of them ridiculously cheap."

And right then I brought up with a short turn. I had started in on the wrong string, and for the life of me could not stop until I had made a mess

of it. When I realized what I had done I stammered a little and was speechless. Somehow, that young lady affected me as no young woman ever did, before or since.

She seemed to notice my predicament, for she said, very sweetly:

"Oh, you are a corn doctor, are you?"

"Yes, miss, I am—a graduate of the Entaw Chiropedic Institution, and with seven years' experience. Corns, as you know, are divided into two classes—the curable and the incurable, the latter being most generally found on the feet of persons well advanced in life, though sometimes affecting the younger. Under the new system their removal is practically painless and but the work of a moment. A bare glance is sufficient to decide as to the treatment required. If there are any corns in this household I shall be happy to inspect them, and until the operation is decided on the consultation will not cost you a cent."

Once started, my confounded glib tongue ran

away with me. Before I knew it I had Miss Higbie—that was her name, Miss Mattie Higbie—converted to my way of thinking. While I was talking I gradually edged my way into the house, and when I politely suggested she show me the corn she had admitted the ownership of, she consented without hesitation.

Alas! the work of my tongue was more artistic than the work of my hand. I must have still been bewildered, for on seeing that corn I fell on it in haste, and without preliminary exhortations tore it out by the roots.

I had said the operation would be painless. On the contrary, the pain was so intense that the young lady gave a scream and fell back fainting.

I did not lose my wits as completely as I might have done, but, raising her head, I shouted for water. Mrs. Higbie came running into the room with a whole basin full, which she dashed into Miss Mattie's face, and under this heroic treat-

ment the young lady began to revive. I have since wondered whether she had entirely fainted.

"You horrid man," she exclaimed, faintly; "I just allowed you to look at my corn. Nobody said you might jerk it out. I shan't pay you a cent."

"And I tell you," shouted Mrs. Higbie, "that you had better be getting away from here before I get a bucket of hot water. If I get a scald on you the hair will come off, bristles and all."

From which I judged she was acquainted with the implements and process of hog killing, and that it was time for me to leave. I slipped out of the house speechless, made my way to the hotel, and vowed this was the last time I would ever pose as a corn doctor.

That evening the landlord, or the hotel clerk, or whoever was running the carvansarie I stopped at, got me in a corner, and before the interview was ended I was broke. Not only broke, but dead-broke. By that time he had heard of some of the schemes I had worked, or tried to work, but worst

of all a report had reached him of my late exploit as a corn doctor. After collecting all that was due him, completely emptying my pockets, he informed me that his hotel could shelter me no longer, and that if I wanted to avoid a coat of tar and feathers it would be well for me to leave the city on the first train. As an afterthought he handed me a letter, which had come for me to the hotel during my absence.

Through all my wanderings I had kept in pretty close touch with the old folks at home, and usually I was glad enough to receive a letter dated from the spot I loved so well.

But this made me mad rather than glad, and yet the tidings in it were pleasant enough. My sister was to be married soon, and sent an urgent request, backed by both father and mother, that I should return home in time for her wedding.

You can imagine my feelings. Here I was, hundreds of miles from home, without a cent in my pockets, or a roof in sight under which I

might lay my head, and the folks at home were rejoicing in my prosperity and inviting me to a wedding.

Thus far my life had been a pretty stormy one. I had worked numberless schemes, visited towns by the hundred, and had experience by the cubic ton, but I had no money. By this time, too, I scarcely had decent clothes. When I began to figure the whole thing over, and thought of my sister's approaching marriage, and how I would like to be there to see the old folks and all the neighbors, I tell you right now I was pretty blue.

It was, of course, an impossibility to get home, and I decided to write a letter telling them so, giving some plausible excuse if I could think of one, but the more I thought of my present condition the madder I got. I finally rose up and shook myself together.

"Look here, old boy," I thought to myself, "this will never do. The world is large, other people are making a living in it, and more than a liv-

ing. There is money enough going, and all that you want to do is to see that you get your share. Here goes."

I took a start toward the office door, and it seems it was a relief to mine host.

"Hope you don't go away mad," he said, "but the fact is, I can't afford to have a lynching party raid my hotel. Don't tell anyone I warned you, but get out of sight as soon as possible. The wonder is the crowd is not here now."

I made no great haste, but I certainly did not linger, and it is an actual fact that before I had got two squares away the crowd had commenced to gather and I could hear someone shouting, "Bring out the blamed rascal."

There was no use for me to go to the railroad station. Indeed, that was the very place for me to avoid. Without a doubt, the landlord would give the gang the tip that I had promised to leave town by the next train, and they would look for me there. There was no train leaving for at least an

hour, and in that time a great deal that was unpleasant could happen.

In my penniless condition, and with such trouble imminent, I knew that my best plan was to get out of town and into the country; and not only that, but to get as far away as I could in the shortest time possible, trusting to finding something on the road to keep the mill of life going until luck took a more friendly turn.

Fortunately, I got away without personal damage, and before long was plodding along the country road, safe but sullen, and it was some time before my face took on its usual smiling expression and I become again the debonnaire soldier of fate.

The change which turned my fortunes occurred in this way:

I heard behind me the rattle of wheels and the swift stepping of horses. Looking back over my shoulder I saw a two-horse wagon, with a falling top over the seat in front, coming towards me at a clipping gait.

The driver drew up a trifle as he neared me and I braced up sufficiently to ask him for a ride.

Without hesitating to consider, he came to a full stop and I climbed in. The tide had turned again and I was to get the advantage of its flow. We soon became very congenial, and when we had exchanged confidences, and I had suggested that I was open for an engagement, my newly-made friend fell in with the idea at once. He was a fakir himself, at present in the patent medicine business, traveling with his own rig.

It did not take us long to reach an understanding. For the present he was to pay my expenses in return for my assistance, and I was to be at liberty to work my side schemes when not engaged about his affairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW DOCTOR AND PROFESSIONAL GRAFTER —MEDICINE FAKE—THE ELECTRIC BATTERY AND MONEY—FUN WITH CROWD ON THE STREET —SELLING PIPES AND GIVING WATCHES AWAY —FOOLING THE FARMERS—THE CIRCUS, TURNIPS AND THE ELEPHANT—WORKING THE HOTEL LANDLORDS.

Once more I had fallen in with a doctor, and though I never considered him as finished an operator as Prof. Carter, he was certainly one of the smoothest men I ever met. He worked his rackets after what were then largely new methods, though now they may seem old enough to most people.

He drove a very lively team, for which I soon found there was a reason, and that he had the strength and the skill to control it. He always had half a dozen fakes on tap, and when the hour

did not seem ripe for one he tried another. By this time I considered myself a pretty good workman, and was really the glibber talker, but he undertook and carried through schemes which I would hardly then have cared to tackle, though I have made money out of some of them since. His wagon was light running, easy riding, and built for his business. It must have cost him a very pretty penny to have it prepared, but he certainly made his profit out of it, in working various things, one of which being what, in conversation with me, he called "the battery scheme." It was the most complicated fake I had up to that time ever met with, but it had its drawbacks, and I often wondered that Doctor Munson had never been shot. There is nothing that makes the average man madder than to be laughed at by a crowd for being fooled when he thinks he has a sure thing. Yet, the doctor simply made an offer without any explanations, and if the fools were silly enough to believe that he was going to give them

all there was in sight, and took him up in the blind, they deserved to lose a little coin and much self-respect.

The doctor had a small flight of stairs covered with copper, which could be placed so that it led into the carriage.

In the carriage was a nice little copper-covered table, or stand, and the stairway and table would be connected with a galvanic battery at the bottom of the carriage. On the table would be displayed several stacks of coin, of different denominations, ranging from one to twenty dollars.

While addressing the crowd the doctor would carelessly finger the money, showing that it was perfectly loose. He would close his remarks by saying that any man who would give him twenty-five cents would receive permission to come up into the wagon, and all the money he could scoop up in one grab would be his own. After that he would turn a button, which established the circuit with the battery, and wait for victims. With

his persuasive tongue he was pretty certain to obtain them, but the moment that one tried to step from the stairway to the wagon he would form a connection for conducting the galvanic circuit through his body, and it operated so strongly that it would be impossible for the man to take anything; he was only too glad to get away alive.

Of course, the circuit could be turned off by the doctor, without the action being seen by the crowd, and there were some places where the whole thing remained a totally unexplained mystery. Half of the audience would declare the poor, miserable victims were in collusion with the doctor, and could reach the money if they tried to, while the other half thought the fun of the thing was worth twenty-five cents, and would yell with laughter every time a man would step up the copper stairs.

As I was to be his assistant, Dr. Munson explained to me his methods, and we had several rehearsals along the road, though I soon convinced

him that there was not much difference between Jack and his master.

At times he made two trips through the section of the country, if it seemed likely to prove profitable. On the first trip he was careful what he said and did, so that there would be nothing to interfere with his coming again. He then carried the "Pain Balm," good for internal as well as external application. He seldom attempted to sell a bottle, but left it with every responsible person he could get to accept the trust. The understanding was that if the individual meantime had found no need for the article, or did not care to purchase, Munson was to take it back on his next call. The price was one dollar a bottle, and the holder was at liberty to try the medicine in case he had need of it, and if it did not prove satisfactory the bottle could still be returned, provided the contents were not one-quarter gone.

Usually, when the doctor came, at the expiration of about three weeks, three-fourths of the

bottles would be returned. Even at that the scheme was good for ordinary profits, and when used in connection with street faking in the towns it helped the business amazingly.

I have said that I had some knowledge of music. The doctor carried several instruments with him, and when we had practiced together for about a week we were able to give quite an interesting entertainment, not only drawing, but holding a large concourse of people. After that there were several methods of handling them. Before we had been traveling together a month I knew them all and one or the other of us would do the work, just as it happened.

For instance: The crowd gathered and we started in by announcing to the good people that to every one who patronized us we would give a piece of pie.

Then I gave a strong talk on the merits of the medicine, and began to offer it for sale. It was a

very cold day if I had not struck some purchasers in the audience, who had a quarter of a dollar—or fifty cents—to throw away, and a curiosity to see what the "pie" looked like. With every bottle or package I sold I would take the quarter received, add another to it, and place them in an envelope. This was done before their eyes, and as I threw the money in a little box I would remark, "There goes a piece of pie."

After selling a dozen or fifteen packages at a quarter each, I would call up every man who had made a purchase and return his quarter, with the other quarter added to it, remarking as I did so:

"There, sir, is your piece of pie."

I would then start selling fifty-cent packages, and with every one sold would put the money, and an extra half, in the box as before, and subsequently returning the double portion.

Apparently, we had money in inexhaustible quantities, and were willing to scatter it freely. By this time the crowd was entirely with us. We

had what some people call the magnetic influence firmly established, and the closer the people packed together the stronger it worked. The man who does not believe in the possibility of getting something for nothing is a rara avis; most any gudgeon will bite at the idea of doubling his money without risk or labor. I would begin to sell one dollar packages, adding two dollars to every one sold, and on calling the customers up to the carriage I returned them their dollars.

By this time I had the crowd worked up to the proper pitch, and I would start to selling five-dollar and ten-dollar packages. With the money received for each five-dollar package I would place a ten-dollar gold piece, and with every ten dollars a twenty-dollar gold piece, the people supposing, of course, that it was going to be "pie." You will notice I made no promise beyond that of giving them "pie," and to that word they attached their own significance.

After I had sold the last bottle I would clear my throat and say:

"Now, gentlemen, before distributing this pie, which, I admit, is largely intended to advertise the most successful remedy ever placed on the market, I wish to make a few closing remarks about my business.

"We are selling this medicine strictly on its merits, which we consider unsurpassed. If there is any man in this crowd who has purchased for any other reason than for its actual merits, I want that man to step right up here and get his money back. I want to impress you with the fact, even though I may be a street fakir, that I am an honest man, and, if I am aware of it, will never deal with a dishonest person, or one who doubts the quality of the goods I sell.

"I also desire to add that if there is any one who questions the legitimacy of our advertising, who thinks it has been money thrown away, or so unscrupulous or dishonest as to patronize me with

the sole purpose of beating a poor street fakir, I ask him as a white man and a gentleman to come up here, get his money back and return the medicine before I distribute the 'pie.' Others who would use the article are vainly waiting to purchase, and this manly course may save some valuable life in the near future. As for men of the other class, I neither ask their money, nor want their patronage."

Then there would be a pause. Of course, no one would come up, and I would conclude by saying:

"I promised every man who patronized me a piece of pie, and I am going to keep my word. The money is put in an envelope, and every gentleman who invested in the late sale will step up to the carriage, show his package and receive his pie."

They would come crowding around, and after the doctor and I had distributed the envelopes with lightning rapidity, the driver would whip up

the horses and we would go away at a gallop.

The last envelopes we handed out contained only nickles.

It takes nerve, of course, to do such work, and it did not do to repeat it often in the same part of the state, as news of it extended rapidly and to quite a distance. That made no difference to us. In the outset, it was agreed that I was to be at liberty to work my own side lines, and though I soon was recognized as a partner, rather than as an assistant, and was paid very fairly, I did not altogether neglect my private interests. Amongst other things, I had sent me, as soon as I had obtained a little more capital, a lot of imported pipes. They were made in Germany and were a close imitation of real meerschaum. Each had a neat imitation amber mouthpiece, and was packed in a dark paper case. The pipes were small, made in fancy designs, and cost me two dollars and a half a dozen. I made my profit by disposing of them between the legitimate sales of our medicine.

I had, also, some very pretty ladies' watches, gold plated, which I had bought for four dollars and a half each. With every twelve pipes sold I raffled off one of these watches, proceeding in a manner entirely original with me, as I shall explain.

Perhaps the doctor had been fairly successful with medicine. Then we would give a little musical interlude, and I would come forward. I would open with a nonsensical story, old now, but which was certainly very effective then. I had a dozen of them pat for every occasion, and by keeping an ear open for local news could make at least the opening of my address sound very appropriate. For instance, if I had heard of a runaway that created some little excitement I would begin like this:

"While walking down your street this afternoon I was witness to a fearful runaway.

"In a wagon drawn by a powerful and spirited

team of horses was a man, with a couple whom I took to be his wife and child. At a glance I judged the man to be intoxicated, though perhaps I was mistaken. He was applying his whip in a frantic manner, as though to test the speed of his team right there in the public street, and the more he whipped the horses the faster they ran, and the more unmanageable they became. They kept going faster and faster and faster, until they looked like a whirlwind of horse flesh and a regular tornado of wagon fixtures. I heard the screams of the frightened woman, and the shrill cry of the terrified child. But I was powerless to reach them, and, gazing with clasped hands, could only whisper: 'God help them.'

"Under such circumstances a catastrophe was inevitable, and it was not long in coming. In their madness the horses dashed into a lamp-post, wrecking the wagon and hurling the man, woman and child far into the street.

"Providentially, as it might seem, not one of

them was seriously injured, and the man, rising to his feet, began to swear over the ruins. The body of the wagon was in kindling wood, and one of the wheels, wrenched from its bearings, lay beside it.

"A policeman unaccountably happened to be on the spot and took in the situation.

"Without saying a word he picked up the wheel and marched with it to the station house.

"That was a touch beyond me, and I have had considerable experience with the working of the average policeman's brain. I couldn't for the life of me understand what he meant by his action. My curiosity was aroused, and I followed for the purpose of investigation.

"Walking up to the officer, I said, 'Mr. Policeman, what in the world was your idea in arresting that wheel?'

"He answered, 'I did it because it was off its nut.'"

Having jollied the people into a good humor by

something like the foregoing, I would come down to the serious business of selling my pipes and raffling off the watches which went with them.

I made a long talk on the watches, telling of the various processes they underwent before they could be called perfect timepieces—of the delicate hairspring, and the tiny, intricate mechanism enclosed in the case. Before I got through, it was safe to say that every man in the crowd wanted a watch for his wife or daughter, mother or sister, to say nothing of his best girl, if he had one. The pipes spoke for themselves, but my little oration included a fair description of their merits, and I usually had little difficulty in disposing of the dozen of them allotted to any particular evening, and I might add that both sides were well satisfied. The pipes were very good while they lasted, and the watch went like a daisy—as long as the wheels turned round. I made good money out of the invoice, and in after days handled the same line of goods more than once.

I am sorry to say, the doctor was something of a beat. Though he always treated me fairly enough, all the rest of mankind seemed to be considered his legitimate game, while the plunder of a landlord was his special delight. He had capital enough at his command, but it appeared to me that he would sooner save fifty cents off his hotel bill than to make five dollars selling medicine.

To tell the truth, I had not much sympathy with the average country landlord, and was not strongly averse to working him myself. He feeds his local trade for twenty-five cents per meal, and when an outsider calls charges him fifty cents or a dollar for the same thing. You can safely conclude that however much a tale of woe may induce him to scale his prices, he is still making a living profit.

When we arrived at a hotel the doctor would ask for the tariff sheet. If he was told it was two dollars a day he would state that he was no commercial drummer, working on salary witl ex-

penses allowed, but just an ordinary vendor on his own account, who, in these hard times, found that to make both ends meet was a pretty tough proposition. Furthermore, that he was paying his own way, and couldn't stand the two dollars.

As a result he would sometimes get rates as low as one dollar a day, for each of us.

When we were ready to go, the doctor would ask for his bill, and then tell Mr. Landlord that business had been bad, that he had been obliged to pay a C. O. D. express bill, and that being about "flat broke" he did not see how he was to pay his account unless the landlord agreed to take it out in medicine at wholesale prices.

Of course, there would be a kick, and he would go on with another proposition.

"I'll tell you what I can do, Mr. Landlord. I've got with me over thirty dollars worth of silverware that I was going to deliver to a lady in the next town. She ordered it from me the last time I was along. As I put up the money for it, I guess

it's still mine to do what I want with, and if you'll take that and call it square, you can have it."

The landlord would be a little interested at that, and the doctor would show him the silverware. Once get the man to looking at it, the rest followed. It made a good showing, and the doctor talked so artistically about the price, quality, etc., that the deal would almost invariably be closed. What that silverware cost it is unnecessary to say, but he always made a fair profit out of the operation. He even sometimes wound up by selling for cash some silver polish or insect exterminator. He always had a full line to catch the landlords, even if other things ran short. I took note of these things and never forgot them. When traveling exclusively on my own account I used the same dodge, or some other closely akin to it.

There was a great deal of humor about the doctor, and he was sometimes inclined to be a trifle revengeful. Here is a case in point:

There was occasionally a town which, work at

answer to our appeals, but the surrounding country as we might, would absolutely refuse to do business. Why this was so, was more than I can explain. We probably tried harder there than elsewhere, but some how the conditions were not right. I remember once in our travels we hit such a town, and not only did the town refuse to try was just as bad. We could not even leave a gratuitous bottle of "Pain Balm" on free trial.

Before long we caught on to the fact that from the flashy appearance of the wagon the farmers believed it belonged to the circus we had noticed was advertised to appear at the town the following week. The doctor made up his mind that that was the reason. In the moral mind the circus man is credited with surpassing shrewdness in all business matters.

For the moment the doctor was mad enough, but he quickly cooled down and determined to play a little trick on them in return. He quit trying to sell goods, and became a buyer. The fields

were fairly stocked with turnips and he told every farmer he could meet that he was purchasing agent for the circus, representing that he was out contracting for turnips to feed the elephants. I am afraid to say how many wagon-loads it took daily to supply the needs of the show, but he offered enormous prices for turnips by the wagon-load to be delivered at the show grounds on the day of the circus.

We never knew the exact outcome, but many a laugh did we have imagining it. The loads of turnips hauled into town that day must have been a caution, even if not more than half the farmers fulfilled their contracts. Of course, the circus people would not take the vegetables; but I afterwards heard that the manager, seeing a chance for a big local gag and advertisement, kindly took them all into the big tent and seated them together in the reserved corner, where the clown could point them out when he told the great joke of the farmers, the elephants and the turnips.

But if those medicine men had showed their faces again in that neighborhood I think the farmers would have killed them, and torn their bodies into fragments as small as turnip seeds.

CHAPTER IX.

SIDE LINES AND SCHEMES OF VARIOUS KINDS —THE GLASS PEN—PIE SCHEME CHOKED OFF —SELLING NOTIONS FROM WAGON—FIGHTING THE RAILROAD BONDS—FORCED TO LEAVE TOWN —LEGISLATED OUT OF BUSINESS—A WARNING AND THE ESCAPE—THE ACCIDENT—THE PENNY RAFFLING SCHEME.

The doctor was not by any means a lazy man, yet he believed, so long as business was prosperous, in taking his rest and ease for a fair share of the day. If he came in at night, after a good lot of sales on the street, he was ready for bed, unless he fell in with some congenial spirits, with whom he might spend an hour or two, "swapping lies."

With me, it was different. I was on the hustle all the time, from the very moment I got together a little capital to invest in side lines. I was a

younger man, you see, and had my fortune all to make, while, from some remarks he occasionally let fall, I was convinced that somewhere the doctor carried a very comfortable bank account and owned a home.

I have already spoken of a silver-plating blind. I was in the habit of working this for all it was worth, and I found my principal patrons at the hotels where I stopped. I never overlooked a chance at a hotel, and I believe that, taking into account only the places where we made temporary stops, my profits at such places sometimes overran our bills.

Everybody on the premises was fair game. To the waitresses, cooks and chambermaids I sold fancy-box paper, jewelry and different little trinkets which I knew were worth the offering, as they would catch their fancy. At night I would take the key to my room and plate it with the silver fluid, doing also the brass check attached to the key.

Bringing it down in the morning I would hand it to the clerk, without saying a word, and he would hang it on the key rack, or put it in the box.

The landlord, coming along in a few moments, perhaps, would notice the contrast and naturally mention it.

I would then speak up and say that I had silver-plated the key just for fun, and asked how he would like to have the balance of them fixed up in the same way. I would generally wind up by making a contract to plate all the keys, and sell him a large bottle of the fluid in addition.

Sometimes, at night, I dropped into the saloons and worked the gamblers there, improving an opportunity to sell them fake goods peculiar to their trade.

I carried in my pocket fountain pens, pencil sharpeners and other little novelties, and, when there was time, cornered any poor mortal I happened to meet and forced him to listen to an oration on their merits. I carried, also, tissue paper,

which, when pasted on a pane of glass, gave it the appearance of being stained.

At another time I had a lot of little bird whistles and other noisy instruments. Without much trouble I became very expert in their use, and after that found them good sellers. Whenever I could strike a crowd and had leisure I sprung such things on them, and nearly always to my profit.

Glass pens were pretty good articles to handle. In fact, they were among the neatest and prettiest novelties I carried. The pen point and holder were made entirely of glass in different tints, the effect being very fine. The point was ridged all around—all sides were alike and the same size, the ridges narrowing at the end so as to form the writing point—and the "pen" would hold a good amount of ink. I claimed one hundred words could easily be written with a single dip of the pen, and perhaps I was not so far wrong. This

was one of the best sellers I had, and yielded enormous profits.

Late and early I pushed my side lines; but as I was always on hand to do my work with the doctor he made no objections, though he must have sometimes suspected that my profits were outweighing his. I am sure he gave me full credit for being an all-round hustler from Hustlerville. Eventually he filled his wagon with notions and sold them on the streets. The authorities in a sudden spasm of virtue had most everywhere shut down on the "pie" scheme, and every householder in the United States appeared to be provided with a bottle of the Pain Balm.

I had less opportunity for my side lines, but as I was a limited partner in the concern I did not complain. The profits of any one particular evening might not be as large as in the medicine trade, but the general average was about as good, and the methods of drawing and holding a crowd were about the same.

It was while we were engaged in this venture that I struck almost, if not altogether, the most exciting period of my life. The doctor and I fought the two thousand inhabitants of Logwater to a finish—and won.

The war came about in this way.

We drove into the town prepared to sell goods from the wagon, and had every reason to expect a prosperous week or more. The merchants, however, got wind of our coming, and at once were rebellious. In anticipation they already saw themselves knocked out by the traveling fakirs, and got their heads together to devise measures for putting a stop to the performance.

As they had much political influence, and several of them were members of the body, a meeting of the city council was called double quick and an ordinance passed, raising the license for street-selling from three dollars, as it had been, to one hundred dollars a day.

As it was not likely our profits could reach such a sum, we decided we could not stand the tax.

and therefore rented a store-room. We then took out a license, hired the local cryer to assist, and proceeded to sell goods at auction, doing a rattling good business the first night.

This made the merchants madder than ever. Again the council was called together and a special ordinance was passed, in which our business was called that of a traveling auction store, and it was also made subject to a license of one hundred dollars a day.

This time they had us surely. We could not stand an expense of that kind, on top of our other outlays, and had to close up. But I told them, when the marshal called to announce the action of the council, that they were not done with us, but that sooner or later we would get even. And I guess we did, and in a way they will never forget.

At that time the town had no railroad, but in anticipation of getting one quite a little boom was being worked up. They had a proposition from the U. & L. R. R., which offered, in consideration

of a bonus of four thousand dollars per mile, to lay its rails to Logwater, and fifteen miles beyond, to a railroad town, on the other side.

To extend such aid would require $104,000.00, and it was proposed to raise this sum by issuing county bonds. A petition was circulated, asking for an election, at which the voters should decide whether or not such bonds should be issued. In a very short time sufficient signatures were procured to justify the call for an election, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that the bonds would be voted. The proposition of the company looked fair enough, the railroad would without doubt prove of great benefit to the county, and there had so far been very little opposition. Everyone in town seemed confident and jubilant.

The proclamation calling for the election was issued the very day our store was closed.

"Very well," thought we, "you've had your innings; now we will try and have ours." We immediately started in to defeat the bonds.

Did we succeed in doing it? Well, let the sequel tell.

During the week we traveled through the country—and didn't we speak to every man we met? We drummed up audiences for evening meetings in the most convenient school house, where we showed up Logwater, its authorities and citizens in the clearest light.

On Saturdays we were in Logwater, and talking all day to the farmers who gathered around.

Curbstone oratory? Well, I should smile. We told them the railroad had offered to build to Logwater in consideration of city bonds alone (which was a fact), but that the citizens of that cut-throat place wanted to saddle the whole thing on the poor farmers, saving expense to themselves, though, in fact, the townspeople were the only ones who would be really benefitted.

To make a long story short, we exposed the whole thing from beginning to end, making it out as one of the most rotten and bare-faced efforts

at robbery that had ever been conceived of or perpetrated on an intelligent community. We convinced the people of the rural districts that the scheme was not only a disgrace to the county, but a burning insult to each and every one of them, which could only be resented by voting on election day against the bonds.

As a side issue, we rang in how the merchants were robbing them, and as a convincing argument reminded them of our own experience. Because we were willing to give the people good goods at living prices, and for so much less than the monopolists at Logwater were in the habit of charging, they had forced us out of town by special license laws which were simply prohibitive.

We worked like troopers, day and night, until election day came. Then we had our revenge to its fullest extent. The bonds were defeated by a small majority.

The campaign cost us over a hundred dollars,

but the satisfaction of getting even with those fellows was worth five times as much. Other companies have their lines running through the county, but Logwater has no railroad to this day.

We were in the city when the election returns came in. While the result was still in doubt the citizens did not seem at all cordial, but we were not in actual peril of our lives. When, however, it became certain beyond a doubt that the bonds were defeated, we were called upon by a deputation, who announced that if we were seen on the streets after two hours had elapsed there would be two dead fakirs.

We skipped.

There was no mistake about the people being in earnest, and the danger was that as we went some vicious fellows of the baser sort might follow with the idea of doing us some bodily damage, even before the given time had elapsed. Out in the country we knew we could find plenty of friends, but there was nothing to keep us in that

vicinity, and the night being fairly bright we drove along quite merrily for perhaps a dozen miles. Then, just at the entrance of a small town, one of the horses broke through a rotten plank on a culvert, and there was a sudden halt. The doctor remained in the wagon, but I took a sprawling leap forward, which landed me on top of the struggling horses.

Fortunately, I was uninjured, though the team was not as lucky. The horse that went into the culvert sprained a leg, while the other got a cut in the hock from a splintered single-tree.

There was a little tavern right in the center of the town, and we made our way there as best we could. The landlord was aroused from a sound sleep by a most vigorous pounding on the door, and the porter—for there was one even in this heaven-forsaken hole—did not show himself at all until it was time for breakfast, some hours later. We got the horses into the barn, and by the light of a lantern took stock of damages.

We saw that the team would not be fit to proceed for some days, and I myself began to feel as though I had been a trifle shaken up. Consequently, we resigned ourselves to the inevitable and went to bed.

It was in this little town that we worked a scheme which seems to have a peculiar fascination and seldom fails to win out. During the first day and evening we made a few sales from the wagon, but the population did not justify a more extended effort. Though there were a good many people visiting the tavern during the day, there were not enough in the town to furnish a working audience. We got up a lottery at the hotel, however, which was managed after this fashion:

Among our other assets was a fine looking "gold watch" worth any price you may choose to put on it, though it actually stood us at about fifteen dollars.

One hundred tickets were numbered and placed in small envelopes. The first number sold for one

cent, the second number for two, the third for three and so on up, the last number selling for one dollar.

The penny part of the business was what caught the people. By the time the horses were ready to proceed, which was in about two days more, the whole neighborhood had been worked up over the brilliant scheme, our eloquence had not been wasted, the last ticket had been sold, the watch had gone into the hands of the lucky winner, and we had raked in our fifty dollars and fifty cents, so that our stay in that town had not been altogether fruitless. We not only cleared all expenses, but went away with a little profit.

Afterward I worked the scheme with diamond rings, custom-made clothing, or any other thing for which there might be a desire or a demand; and until the novelty wore off, or the location was exhausted, it proved very successful.

CHAPTER X.

CATCHING SUCKERS—BITING MYSELF—THE HOSPITAL NURSE AND MAIL ORDER SCHEME—WORKING SALOON MEN ON BIBLE RACKET.

As I have already hinted, the work of the fakir changes with the seasons, and though some winters it was possible to continue street business successfully, especially by travel in the south, yet as a rule I have usually altered my route and plans to correspond with the climate.

My partner was of the same opinion, and late in the fall turned his face homeward, working as he went. There had been no friction between us; he had been very honorable in his division of the spoils, and I confess I parted from him with many regrets. We did talk of getting together again the next spring, but the life of a fakir is full of uncertainties, so that his best laid plans will

often "gang awry." I did not see him again for perhaps half a dozen years.

Then, one day I came across him very unexpectedly in the street. He had experienced ups and downs since our parting, and just then was rather down than up. He actually tried to work me with the "pop-corn" racket. That, you know, is a sort of game of chance, and, like all other propositions of the kind, when the banker knows his business, as it is safe to gamble that he does, the chances, if there are any, remain in his favor.

I knew the doctor in a moment, and when he seemed to put a five-dollar bill into a ball of pop-corn, which he mixed with half a dozen other balls and then offered me my choice for a quarter, I felt like shouting.

Instead of that, I gravely handed him the quarter, appeared to hesitate long over my choice, but finally selected the ball farthest away from me.

What followed was a surprise, for without ex-

amining the ball, or attempting to open it, I tossed it into the street.

"Come, doc," I said, "you don't mean to say you don't remember me—Jim Weldon? How has the world been using you, old man?"

He gave me a second glance, and knew me then fast enough, so we shook hands heartily. He told me how the failure of a promising legitimate business venture had put him flat on his back, but that he had gone to work once more at the foot of the ladder, hoping by spring to be able to start on the road again in something of his old style. Poor fellow. I gave him, at parting, as big a stake as he would accept, and heard from him a few months later, when he was preparing for the campaign, but he died the next summer of yellow fever.

As I have said, the summer campaign had been successful and I had wealth galore. If I preferred to do so I could live after a modest fashion until spring came again without doing a stroke, and I

was once more anxious to get into harness. I made a short visit home, where they were all glad to see me, and then started out for a visit to some of the eastern cities. I not only wanted to see their methods and style, but to get in closer touch with the men who largely produced the novelties by the sale of which I expected to make my living.

The trip paid me well. There was not, now, much of the green country youth in me or my appearance, but I cut a few eye-teeth nevertheless. By this time I had taken on age, so that I could easily pass for a man half a doen years older than I really was, and I imagined I was pretty well up in all the tricks of the trade. But I found that I had a great many to learn, and I proceeded to learn them. I discovered that there were plenty of men in my line who sold nothing but the output of their brains, and that brought the highest kind of a price. Also that there were many lines of business, which I had always taken to be of the staidest, soberest, most legitimate nature, which,

after all, were handled after the style of the greatest fakes I had ever handled on the road. Some of them I decided to try in the future when the time seemed propitious; others seemed to be a little overpowering to suit even me.

When it was all outgo and no income, of course, my sight-seeing began to get away with my money, and though my pocket could stand the stream for some time to come, I could not bear to be idle. It was not long before I had mastered the situation and drifted into an humble effort of occupation.

At first my efforts were largely for the purpose of experience, and to give me something to do. It was really in a spirit of fun that I spread my first nets to catch suckers. It was by no means the line I had ever expected to follow, but there was a fascination about it, after I once began to employ printer's ink, which led me on until, before long, I was about as bad as the worst of the class, while I had the remarkable good fortune of not

being brought up with a round turn. Once in a while a fellow who gets too fresh falls into the hands of the police and must answer to the law.

Once, in my younger days, I enclosed a dime in answer to an advertisement which promised to tell applicants how to travel without paying railroad fare. The response I got was, "Walk instead of ride."

This is a fair pattern of many fakes; and to my great amusement, and somewhat to my profit, I tested the calibre of a number of them that winter at a trifling expense. You know the old saying, "A sucker is born every minute." I did not consider myself a sucker by any means, and yet I did considerable "biting" while I was considering the ways and means of my brethren of the trade.

I may say that my own opinion is, the postal authorities of those days were neither so keen nor vigilant as they are now, or these fellows would not have gotten along without more trouble. There were not so many, and before I got through

I had traced them out and knew them all. I had also got myself posted on the advertising sheets which had the widest circulation, and the best line of readers. I knew that when an ad. appeared in their pages, if the scheme was a good one and the work artistically done, results were pretty apt to accrue in a short time.

What sort of fakes were they? Well, for instance, how does this strike you? In those days the Louisiana Lottery was in full swing, and the fellow who advertised a sure "system" to catch the capital prize must have made a little fortune. The answer that he gave me in return for my dime was: "Hold the winning number."

One of the best ads. I saw was headed, "How to Make Money Fast." I sent in ten cents. I received a little book containing full particulars of the U. S. mint.

"How to make Pantaloons Last" was a catchy heading, and though I suspected the answer I dropped another dime in the slot and obtained the

information, "Make the Coat and Vest First."

The last one I tested offered for a dime full instructions on the subject, "How to Get Rich Without Working." I was told to catch suckers, like they did.

That settled it with me. There was nothing to be learned from the gentry of that ilk, and I began to cast about with the view of taking this very sensible advice.

I did not propose to rob the people, however, mentally deciding my suckers should get as little hook and as much bait as was possible for the money.

I hunted up an intelligent young drug clerk, who had done some medicine reading in his time, and who was not averse to making the expenses of a future course at a medical college by assisting me to carry out what I had in view. From the doctor with whom he had been reading he obtained what was really a first-class prescription

for piles, to which, guided by his knowledge, we made certain additions.

Then I inserted the following advertisement:

"Free.—A Valuable Remedy for Piles. Free. Address 'Retired Hospital Nurse,' No. 66 N— St., New York."

Inquiries by mail came pouring in from all over the country. Most of the correspondents enclosed postage stamps, and to those who did not we wrote anyhow, enclosing the prescription. I wrote to each of them about as follows:

"Dear Sir:—Your favor of recent date just received, and I take great pleasure in sending you the prescription, as advertised. I desire to particularly caution you that it must be used strictly in accordance with directions. Have it put up at a place where only first-class drugs are kept. The articles are so delicate that they must be pure and fresh.

"You may find it difficult to procure a few of the ingredients named in this prescription, espe-

cially if you reside in a small town. I would inform you that in such case I have made arrangements with a reliable pharmacist here, who will put up the entire prescription and forward it by express, all charges prepaid, for one dollar and thirty cents. Yours truly,

"HOSPITAL NURSE."

As the ingredients I had hinted at as hard to procure, though they had nice sounding names, never were heard of by any country druggists; those who decided to use the prescription according to the direction invariably sent me their orders, and I returned them a number one, tip-top pile remedy, which cost just thirty cents. My partner got materials at wholesale prices, and now-a-days every one knows the tremendous profits at which such things are sold at retail.

I did not live economically by any means, but after I got started this thing more than paid my expenses, while my friend and partner, the drug clerk, had enough laid up to insure his diploma

as an M. D., and probably this very day would as soon think of dying as running a professional advertisement in a newspaper.

I worked this pile scheme until the novelty of it wore off, and then began to think of hitting the road again. It was while making the rounds in New York City, looking for something to handle, that I accidentally strolled into a trade auction house.

I made a purchase there, which, for a time, I feared was going to turn out a total loss. I bought three hundred and eighty pocket bibles. My bid was made "for fun," and when they were knocked down to me at a ridiculously low price I had to take them, though I had no idea of how they were going to be disposed of. I was not exactly the sort of individual, either in manner or appearance, to travel around selling the good book; and I had my doubts if I could get rid of them, even if I tried.

They were beauties, though, bound in morocco,

with gilt edges and tuck covers; and the longer I had them the more I was convinced there were plenty of people hungering and thirsting for the books, if I only knew who they were, and how to reach them.

At last I hit upon a plan. I always did hit a plan if I took the time, and that was my weak point. I was apt to waste many precious moments in reflection which should have been used in action.

What I thought of was this:

Through the aid of several different city directories I secured the names of hundreds of saloon-keepers. As a class—outside of their own business, which I do not at all revere—they are a jolly, happy-go-lucky lot of people, who admire what has the appearance of a practical joke, are free with their money, and are on the best of terms with all the world and the rest of mankind.

I wrapped each book in a neat and separate package, and distributed the whole lot so that the

three hundred and eighty volumes would reach three hundred and eighty different saloon-keepers on Christmas day, each one priced "One dollar, C. O. D."

One day ahead I sent out to each individual I had marked as my own a letter like the following:

"Dear Brother:—The good book hath said, 'There is a time for everything,' and there is a time to turn from earthly joys and earthly gains and think of those mansions in the skies which one day will be our lot if we only redeem the accepted time. It has well been said, 'Prepare thy souls for the Resurrection day and the judgment.' To do this you must read the good book, else you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

"I send you today by express a nice pocket edition of the bible. If you think it may save your soul, take it and pay the charges. If you have no confidence in the holy book do not receive it. In any case, God bless you. From

"A Friend."

About one-third of the bibles were accepted on the first delivery. I took my money, which was more than half profit, and magnanimously presented the express company with the remaining unclaimed packages, suspecting that every one of them would be a dead loss to me.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PORTRAIT BUSINESS—TRICKS OF THE TRADE—THE BAND AND HALL PLAN—EXCITEMENT AND JOKE AT VOTING CONTEST—THE FRAME SCHEME.

The season came when I was to go on the road again. The winter had been one largely of rest and study, during which I had practiced my vocation enough to make a little money and keep my hand in. Added to the capital acquired in the latter part of the previous summer's campaign, I was ready to take up almost any line of work.

I confess I had a yearning for something new; something that would lead me along the quieter walks of life, and be less wearing on nerves and throat than the street-selling of the former season. After looking around, and making a list of dealers and their stock, which might be useful in the future, I decided that for the present I would

turn my attention to the picture or portrait business.

It was a comparatively new thing then, and even now it has not been entirely worked to death.

There was then a fair profit in pictures or portraits, and by the time one sold a high-priced frame the outcome was immense. I got my instructions, and when I first started out was half inclined to believe that the trade would prove too humdrum, a too every-day sort of an affair, to suit my hustling nature.

I soon found, however, that it took as lively working as anything I had been engaged in if I wanted to make it a success; hence, I fell to in earnest, determined that a success it should be.

It is not worth while to relate all the little, ingenious dodges employed, or the extraordinary efforts I made upon emergency. I remembered the maxim, that what made a good argument for one line would do for another, and so, altering it to suit the article and the circumstances, I drew

largely on the fund of expedients gathered in other fields, and worked on human nature in the same old way. I soon got to be very successful, and when once I decided there was a chance to place a picture I seldom gave up until I had succeeded.

I never was ashamed of my business, and generally managed to have my presence in a town pretty well advertised. When I had been there a couple of days, and went swinging down the street, there were few if any of the citizens who saw me but would know I was the picture man, who was taking orders for enlarged portraits and the like, and plenty of them would have some remark to that effect. I carried a fine line of samples, was a pleasant, fluent talker, and I fairly believe many a lady would have been disappointed if I had not called on her with my wares. Sometimes I took orders direct for frames to the pictures; sometimes I waited and delivered the picture placed in a frame, trusting to be able to sell

the latter at a good price. If a town at large did not turn out the average profit, then a single individual or so would have to bear the sins of omission of the rest.

There are more tricks in the picture business than one would imagine. I know of one fakir who works the following scheme: After staying in the town long enough to make a study of the inhabitants and the peculiarities and foibles of the more prominent, he selects his victim.

He calls on some lady leading in social circles, church work or the like, and obtains a private interview.

He tells her that a number of her lady friends and admirers have decided to present her with a fine, enlarged, crayon portrait of herself, and that he has been instructed to call and get her photograph.

Naturally, she is surprised and highly gratified, giving him the picture without the least hesitancy.

At the same time she is probably anxious to learn the names of the donors.

The fakir tells her that that is a profound secret, and that he is sworn to reveal no names, though he has no hesitation in giving her the cost of the picture. That is to be twenty-five dollars. Then he starts for the door, but turns around to say, "Oh, by the way, they said nothing about a frame. Don't you want to buy one? A picture of that kind never produces one-half the effect without a frame, and of course we can give you a better quality at a cheaper rate than you can get from your local dealers."

Sometimes she would say, "I do not think I will buy until I get the picture."

Then the fakir proceeds to tell her that his reputation is staked on that picture, and that if it is satisfactory he will obtain a dozen orders for the ten-dollar size; and that he could not think of delivering such a work of art without a properly matched and corresponding frame.

The lady is already in a good state of mind, being elated over the idea of receiving such an elegant present, and is not at all inclined to quibble on the matter of expense; the fakir is argumentative, eloquent and persuasive. She falls his victim. In a few days the portrait is delivered, grandly framed, and the flattered lady hands out her share, never suspecting that the cost of the frame well covered the price of it and the picture.

That is one way to make the business pay, and if the lady is too innocent to find out the deception, her portrait can be made a stepping-stone for a dozen other orders, just as was suggested to her. After all, people are a good deal like sheep—a whole flock will follow where one leads, however unwittingly.

The fact is, I would have been willing to give away the portrait every time if I could have obtained full price for the frame, had it not been contrary to business principles.

Sometimes, after securing a number of orders,

some of them would be turned back to me. The party might die, or go broke, or something else happen, and I usually had some dead wood on my hands about the time I was almost ready to leave.

That gave me little trouble. The frames were very fine, of six-inch, heavy moulding, beautifully fluted and with gilt or oxidized trimmings. So far as looks went, they were worth all you might ask for them, if you left out of account the actual cost of manufacture. I would walk into a man's place of business and set the frame against something so the light could shine full upon it. Then I would ask:

"What do you think of that for six dollars?"

Customer.—"It's pretty nice, but don't try to sell me any today; I haven't the money."

Agent.—"Who said I wanted to sell them? I am giving them away."

Customer.—"How is that?"

Agent.—"I'll tell you. I am in the picture business, and only furnish frames as an accommoda-

tion. I had some thirteen orders turned back on me, and I want to get rid of the frames. Freight is double first-class, and it don't pay to ship them back. Besides, I haven't the time to fool with them, and I'm going to close them out regardless. I'll tell you what I'll do. If I can get thirteen orders in this town I'll deliver them, just like this, all complete and ready to frame your picture in, for one dollar apiece. And I'll bet one hundred dollars you never saw a frame of that kind sold under seven dollars."

Customer (examining the frame and getting interested).—"Well, I must say, that is pretty cheap."

Agent.—"Cheap? Why, it is virtually giving them away, but I want to get rid of them."

Customer.—"You go ahead and see what you can do with some one else. In the meantime I'll see my wife and find out what she thinks about it. You can drop in after dinner for my answer."

Agent.—"See here, my friend, don't make so

much fuss over a small sum. Your wife would be ashamed to object to it. Would you kick if she invested such a little amount as that at home? Of course, you wouldn't. You're not that kind. If your wife don't say it's right up to date and altogether lovely I'll let her have it for nothing. What more do you want?"

Customer.—"Well, I don't know. Have you sold any of them yet."

Agent.—"Oh, yes; I've taken several orders this morning."

Customer—"Well, I guess you can put me down for two frames. You agents are worse than fly paper. You stick a man every time."

Agent—"Ha, ha. Do you think so? If I have the luck today that I expect I'll deliver those frames bright and early tomorrow morning. Good day, sir."

At which point I would back myself out as gracefully as I could and go in search of another customer. Perhaps, before I was out of the door,

he would stop me to talk picture, and eventually insist on my enlarging photographs for himself and wife to fill the purchases.

I was doing well, and making plenty of money, but I wanted to do better.

I might have had a presentment of my fate when I launched out, from the fact that I had already noticed a peculiarity about my fortunes. While I could do well by myself, or could work well in company so long as the other fellow ostensibly managed the concern, yet when I attempted to play manager over other people I always went broke, or the aggregation dissolved with breathless suddenness.

I thought of this before I branched out in the picture business after the fashion I did, but the idea I had seemed such a good one, and I was already so largely a winner, I shut my eyes, locked my teeth hard, and vowed I would break the hoodoo that seemed to be over me, or know the reason why.

Later on I discovered the reason in this particular case, and the knowledge only came just in time to save me from again landing in the ranks of the busted. The brief history of the experiment was about this:

After trying the old style of canvassing, that is, personally taking orders from door to door and returning at a future day to make deliveries and collections, I struck on one of the most elaborate schemes for working the portrait business that had ever been introduced.

The idea was probably suggested by my meeting, as I had done more than once before, with a party of stranded people of the theatrical profession. In the summer-time you are apt to run across the very best kind of people who are out of an engagement, or who may have been left behind by an absconding manager of a "snap" company, which they had joined in default of anything better to do until the regular fall season opened.

After thinking the matter over for a day or

two, and arranging my plans, I formed a company consisting of eight people, all of them musicians and actors. I got some printing done, and ordered more, and started out on the road to work my business in opera houses or large halls. I had with me, also, a superior artist.

During the day, by way of advertising, the band would give open air concerts, at times when they were not otherwise engaged, and in the evening there was a grand, free entertainment in the opera house. Between the acts I made a talk from the stage, exhibited specimens of work by the aid of the "oxo-hydrogen lime light," and solicited business. I took the orders, finished the pictures, delivered and collected, all before leaving the city. I paid the expenses of my troupe and had them canvass during the day, paying them an additional ten per cent. upon all the orders they secured. It was immense.

Up to about this time the large, framed portrait was a rarity, and in every vicinity there were

hundreds of people with small pictures of their relatives or themselves, which, with the proper working, they discovered they wanted to possess in an enlarged form.

In those towns or cities which I visited (and, of course, with such an aggregation to support, I selected only the larger towns), I made my business quite the fashionable folly or fad, and many a ten dollars was, no doubt, expended just to keep in with the swim. I heightened the interest in half a dozen ways, and for a time certainly met with all the success I had anticipated.

Sometimes I came to the rescue of a struggling congregation, which wanted to buy a new organ, or square up the preacher's salary, or raise money for some other purpose. I remember, at Haddam City, I raffled off two large oil paintings, advertised as worth two hundred and fifty dollars. I had used them as drawing cards, placing side by side with them reduced copies, to show the possibilities of our art. On starting the raffle I made

the most glowing announcement from the stage. I explained that I had found these works of art too bulky to carry with me from town to town. They were so valuable that it required more care to protect them from injury than we could afford to give.

I proposed that during my stay in the town I would give to each patron a number for every dollar invested, entitling him or her to a chance in a drawing for one of the pictures, which I intended to make on the last night. The other picture I then offered as a prize for a voting contest for the most popular young lady in the city, the proceeds to go to the benefit of the church.

Before making this offer, I had looked over the ground very carefully, and was certain it would yield a success. I found I had not been mistaken. The pictures were really fine ones, costing me fifty dollars at wholesale, but by using them in this way I believe they netted me more than their cost.

The voting contest developed a rivalry I had not anticipated, and not only were the audiences immense, but the dimes rolled by the dozen into the hands of the two young gentlemen that were appointed treasurers of the church.

Our own interests were not forgotten. They seemed about that time to be tangled up with those of the church, and the way we gathered orders, both at the entertainments and in the outside canvass, kept my artist working night and day, and very nearly strained my ability.

In anticipation of the step, I had headed my troupe on the second evening of our stay in the place, which happened to be Sunday, and we all filed into church together. Our exhibitions, while lively and interesting, were all of the most unobjectionable order, and in every way I worked it so that we would seem, as we were, worthy of the support of the best people.

At the outset it seemed a foregone conclusion that a Miss Kitty Kneilson would carry away the

palm. She was so far ahead at the close of the second evening of voting that I was afraid interest might slacken and the receipts fall off. The next evening there happened, altogether by chance, something I would never have thought of, and if I had would scarcely have dared to suggest.

Some innocent, scatter-brained, harum-scarum young fellow dropped a vote in the box inscribed with the name of "Claude Maxwell." When that name was read out there was a roar through the house, and I was afraid there was going to be trouble. Claude Maxwell was a very estimable young gentleman, but he belonged to that class who from their fair appearance, exact dress, and mincing manners are sometimes called dudes. He was bright, big-hearted and full of life, but every one recognized the joke, and there was a clapping of hands, and much laughter, before it was thought how Maxwell might take it.

All doubt on that score was removed by the

young gentleman himself, who arose in the seat, somewhere near the front, a smile on his features, and made a profound bow.

With that the game was started. Maxwell had any quantity of friends among the young folks, and they all seemed seized with a sudden desire to "josh" him. The next moment the tellers announced "Ten more votes for Claude Maxwell." Some one had thrown in a dollar to keep the joke going.

I understood that Miss Kneilson was the more affronted of the two; but as she belonged to the church, and both she and Maxwell were members of the choir, her friends convinced her that nothing better could have happened. Before long she was enjoying the contest as much as anybody.

You cannot imagine the interest and the amount of money that can be drawn into such an affair at times, when the contest grows close and the people are excited. When the musicians played the Marseillaise on the last night there were a few

hundred folks worked up to a fever heat, and had it not been announced beforehand that the voting would cease precisely at ten o'clock I have an idea that fifty dollars more might have been taken in that evening. The polls closed precisely on the stroke, and just a moment before a five-dollar bill was slipped in, which secured the picture for Claude Maxwell by a majority of five.

Amid much laughter and cheering Mr. Maxwell arose to his feet and bowed his smiling thanks to the audience.

Not at all abashed by the screams of the audience the young man proceeded to say that while, for the good of the church in which he and the other contestants were so deeply interested, he had been willing for the matter to proceed, yet he had never for a moment actually contemplated appropriating the prize to himself. He therefore took great pleasure in presenting the beautiful work of art to the real choice of the assemblage, Miss Kitty Kneilson.

He sat down amidst thunders of applause.

I had to remain three or four days to complete the orders we had taken, and the treasury of the church was filled to overflowing.

CHAPTER XII.

TRICKS IN DELIVERING AND COLLECTING—THE STINGY LANDLORD AND THE PRUNES—DAY BOARD $3.00 PER WEEK—DRUMMERS $2.00 PER DAY—THE ELOPEMENT.

In the previous chapters I have said something about orders that were turned back on my hands, and the methods I employed to make at least some profit out of my failures. I want to say a little more on the subject, referring principally to delivering and collecting. My remarks will apply not only to the picture and frame business, but also to the book and encyclopedia lines, in which I was subsequently largely and successfully engaged.

A good talker, with a fair knowledge of his subject, can generally make sales, but his work does not end there. He has not only to make a contract, but he has to see that it is executed.

There is but one way to do anything in this world, and that is the right way.

When I first started out by myself to take orders for pictures, I had in mind the fact that I was also to do my own delivering and collecting.

As to the canvass, I was as suave as you please, but in making deliveries I had to act according to circumstances.

In taking orders I always gave the customer a duplicate slip of his contract. This, among other conditions, stated that articles were to be delivered according to agreement with the agent, who had positive instructions to make no misrepresentations, and that a countermand would not be received under any circumstances; that any failure to deliver would be charged up against me.

You see, this duplicate was a great ice breaker when I called around with my pictures or books and expected the money.

Occasionally I ran across an individual who would try to back out. In such a case I would in-

sist on leaving the article anyway, and would say, "Oh, that's all right. If you can't conveniently spare the money now I will call around and see you again before I leave town. You can pay me then."

Without waiting for an answer I would turn on my heel and walk rapidly away.

The next day I would call again. If the money was still slow to come I would say, "I will call to-morrow morning and I wish you would please have the amount ready for me then. I want to leave by an afternoon train."

If I called the third time and found no money I would rise in my wrath—real or pretended as the case might be—and call his attention to every clause in the duplicate contract he held. If that would not win him over I would wind up with a tongue lashing and perhaps threaten to have him arrested.

I most generally brought an unwilling customer to time by the third visit, though, of course,

there were cases in which no plan would win. Sometimes I would succeed by arousing sympathy, where no other method would have been of any effect. I would argue that a man had no right to order an article, and put one to a great expense and loss of time, unless he expected to accept and pay for it when delivered.

In traveling with the troupe I found far less trouble in making deliveries and collections than I had done when by myself. The whole business was such a public affair, and delivery and collection followed so soon after the order was given, that few thought of refusal. A large proportion of the orders were secured in the public hall, the rest being obtained in canvasses made by members of the troupe during the day time. They were also supposed to do their own delivering and collecting, though I was often called in to attend to difficult or delicate cases.

By the way, to show you that the life of a fakir is not all devoted to business, but that it has also

its romantic side, I may as well introduce a little occurrence which happened under my observation during the season that my company was on the road.

Business, as I have said, was driving and I had procured a young man by the name of Thompson to assist the artist in finishing up pictures. He was really a fine young fellow, and his father had a large photograph gallery of his own, in which Aleck would have continued to work had he so chosen. But he took a notion to see something of the world, and so came out to me, where he could knock around a bit and at the same time draw good wages for a fair amount of labor.

As a rule I stopped at pretty good hotels, where, however, I generally secured fair rates. Shortly after Aleck joined me we were in a town where we had to accept a lodging place that was far from satisfactory. The house was tolerable, considering, and I had obtained pretty good terms, but the landlord was one of those ex-

tremely stingy, miserly fellows that are repulsive to everybody and gives one a pain to be thrown with. He was so stingy it even seemed to hurt him to give change. I honestly believe he was the original introducer of the fad of using a wart on the back of his neck for a collar button. He kept one of those characteristic hotels so familiar to all traveling men, and in the office there hung a sign something like this:

Single Meals, 20 Cents.
Day Board, $3.00 Per Week.
Drummers, $2.00 Per Day.

The landlord was not only mean and miserly, but he was given to the use of strong drink. It was told as an actual fact that in one of his drunken fits he walked out of his room, leaving his latch key on the table. The door locked behind him and when he was ready to return he climbed over the door, through the transom, and secured the key. He then crawled back into the

hall, through the same hole, unlocked the door and staggered in.

Some of his transient guests once played a good joke on him, which gave him a great deal of free advertising.

At that hotel prunes were served as a dessert three times a day and thirty days in the month. A crowd of traveling men were sitting at the dinner table, discussing various topics, when the landlord walked in. One of the knights of the grip called to him:

"Say, landlord, we have made a wager here, and you are the only man who can settle it."

"What is it?" said mine host.

"Well," responded the traveling man, "I bet a new hat that this dish of prunes is the same mess that was on the table when I was here a month ago."

The landlord replied hotly that it was not the same; that he served fresh prunes at every meal.

"Hold on," interrupted the drummer; "now

that I come to think of it I can decide that bet myself. When I was here before I dropped a half dollar in the dish."

With that he picked up a spoon, drove it into the prunes, and fished out the fifty-cent piece he had secretly dropped in a few minutes before.

The old man, amazed, glared at those prunes for a moment and, growing red in the face with rage, picked up the dish, went out to the kitchen and cussed the cook for a week.

This landlord was a widower and had a very handsome daughter, whom he treated shamefully. He forced her to work early and late, wait on the table, do chamber work, help in the laundry, etc. He would not allow her to wear anything better than a common gingham dress, nor could she go anywhere nor get acquainted with anybody. She wanted an enlarged picture of her dead mother, and when she asked her father for permission to order it, instead of consenting he slapped her in

the face. All this in the presence of Aleck, who happened to be there at the time.

Aleck immediately left the house, but when he returned the next day it was to present the girl with a large crayon portrait of her mother, the picture being enclosed in a handsome frame.

The two met in the parlor every evening after that, the old man being apparently oblivious of what was going on, and the upshot of it all was that on the following Sunday night they eloped to a neighboring town and were married. Aleck went back to his father's gallery, and is there to-day with his wife.

The old landlord did not try to make trouble for them, but turned all his wrath on me. He swore I was to blame for the whole thing, threatened to shoot me, to have me arrested, and everything else.

I denied, point blank, having had anything to do with the affair; but I do not mind now ac-

knowledging that Aleck did consult me, that I advised him to make the run, and loaned him an extra twenty dollars to get away with.

CHAPTER XIII.

WORKING THE SALOON KEEPER FOR AN EXTRA FIVE—ALONE AGAIN—ARRESTED—FIGHTING THE LICENSE—SICK—THE INSURANCE SCHEME—THE WHEEL AND CIGAR DODGE—THE STAGE HOLD-UP—THE HORSE DOCTOR AND CHOLERA—CIGARS TWO FOR A NICKEL—MAKING A PREACHER SWEAR.

Things went along apparently prosperous for some months, until the time to form engagements for the fall and winter came around, when my best people asked for a raise in salary.

At first I was inclined to grant it, for I liked the business, and, on the face of things, I ought to make a fortune.

But the briefest reflection told me that I would be entering on a new campaign, and like a wise and noble general I ought to sit down and figure out the cost.

After that, though it took time, it was not hard to come to a conclusion. I had been doing a thriving business, but I had the field all to myself, with very little opposition from regular exhibitions. The season was coming when the people in the towns which I would care to work might have a surfeit of amusement.

I discovered, also, that if my receipts had been large, so also had been my expenditures. I went on, figured out the profit, cost and loss and decided to quit right then.

While apparently doing a business that should have yielded a large surplus, my expenses were already so great that I was actually making less money than when traveling alone, while a few weeks of poor business, such as were liable at any moment to occur, would put me decidedly in the hole. I paid off all salaries to the end of the month, closed up my affairs, disbanded my company, and once more hit the road, solitary and alone.

After all the noise and rush of the past months, the first few weeks which followed were solemn, if not awful; but I stuck it out, found that the portrait line was as good as ever, and what I made was my own. I could visit towns which had been too small to stand the expense of the troupe, but were full to the brim of untouched business, which I worked after the same old style.

When a great battle is won by shrewd maneuvering they call it a splendid display of strategy; when a fakir carries his point in the same way it is branded as infernal trickery. Early in the battle of life I discovered that I would have to do a great deal of strategical maneuvering or starve; and I seldom failed, however well defended his front might be, to turn the flank of the enemy if it was at all unprotected, often snatching victory out of the very jaws of defeat.

Once, under peculiar provocation, I obtained an order from a saloon keeper for a nice crayon

portrait of his wife. I had great hopes of getting an order for his own portrait also, and with that end in view, and being naturally of a generous disposition when I circulated among the boys, I spent about five dollars at the bar. When he turned me down in what I thought rather a bare-faced style, I set about getting even.

His wife was a pronounced brunette, with black, curly hair, bright eyes and clear-cut features, being an excellent subject for a portrait.

When the picture was finished it was really a very fine one, and taking it around to the saloon a day or two before I had promised delivery I asked his honor what he thought of it. He admired it immensely and was more than pleased.

"Well," said I, "it may be a surprise, but this picture is not for you. The one you ordered is not finished yet, and this is done by a new process and for a particular purpose.

"If that is not for me I'd like to know who it is for?" he asked, about as angry as he was surprised.

"For me," I told him. "It is such a perfect picture, and such a splendid example of what the new art will do, and what a magnificent picture can be obtained for only ten dollars more, that the house has sent it to me to canvass with."

You can believe that he got dead stuck on the picture and wanted it instead of the other. I asked him an increase of ten dollars for it, but compromised by accepting from him five dollars more than the original contract price. He never knew the difference, and I got back the money I had spent at his saloon.

Things went along swimmingly for some time. So successful had I been that I was feeling my oats all over, and expected to go right along through the winter, when I ran foul of a legal proposition, and learned the lesson that it takes money to buy justice; and though the law may be on your side it sometimes requires an awfully long time to reach it.

Every man who has traveled on the road has

probably had more or less trouble about license; and the time arrived when I was to get my experience. I was arrested while soliciting in the portrait business, and was fined fifty dollars in a city court.

I was always rather a good fighter, anyway. I had what I thought at that time plenty of money, and my business life seemed to be at stake. Instead of paying that fine and letting the matter drop I took an appeal and vowed to follow the matter up. When, finally, the state supreme court affirmed the decision of the city court, and I still refused to pay, I found myself tight in jail, with a suspicion that I had to knuckle or remain there indefinitely.

I still had money to talk, and, as the frames were made in one state, I was traveling in a second, and was a resident of a third, there was little trouble in getting the case before the supreme court of the United States, though it did seem to me it took a terrible long time for that court to

come to a decision on a very simple case.

When their opinion did come, however, it was in my favor, and reversed all the lower courts.

The justices held, in effect, that a man could not be taxed for simply making a living; that the license demanded from me had been an attempted piece of extortion, which was an usurpation of power for the officers to have sought to collect, when it was their duty to see that law and justice were secured to all.

It was further held that no state nor city could levy a tax on interstate commerce, in any form or guise, or on receipts derived from that transportation, or on the occupation or business of carrying it on.

Of course, this was a great victory for me—when it came—but it did not prevent me having some very uncomfortable months and a course of treatment which might have meant ruin to some.

Perhaps they mistook their man. Certainly the authorities only considered me as a thief and

a vagabond from the very start, and were determined to show me that a fakir had no rights which they were bound to respect. I was arrested in the very harshest manner, and though a couple of citizens temporarily signed as my security, it was not long before I found myself in jail, where on entering I was stripped of my diamonds and all the loose money I had in my pockets, which last was quite a little sum. They appeared to want to make sure of the fifty dollars fine and costs, and if possible to prevent my having any money with which to fight the city in the courts and to make my stay in that jail as uncomfortable as possible. My treatment there was simply vile, and when I took a severe cold in an infernally bad cell, and through lack of attention the cold drifted into pneumonia, I began to believe there was a conspiracy to murder me. I think I would have died had it not been for some good ladies, who at that very moment were being sneered at for at-

tempting to inaugurate practical Christianity by visiting those who were sick and in prison. They managed to see that I was nursed through to semi-convalescence, and made an effort to have my fine remitted and a discharge granted. The county attorney appeared against them, however, and as they were represented by a young man of more goodness than knowledge of law or eloquence their prayer was denied.

Feeling sure, then, that the city would remain obdurate, and that to remain longer in prison would mean death, I paid fine and costs under protest and crawled out to the free sunlight once more, "busted" in health and pocket, and only too glad to get out.

In the end, as I have told, I procured a decision of the United States court in my favor, and then my counsel came back on the city for damages, eventually settling with the authorities for a nice little sum. Long before that, however, I had largely recovered my health and spirits and

was once more on the high road to prosperity.

When I came out of prison I was in no condition, financially, to long remain idle, for I had no idea of asking or receiving assistance from the folks at home. Nor was I in condition physically to do the exhaustive hustling I had been following for some years. I had to take up with something easy, and as I had no capital to speak of there was no time to pick and choose. I took up with the first thing which offered employment, and considered myself lucky that as a stranger in a strange place I was able to secure a position as solicitor for an insurance scheme, which was certainly as big a fake as any I had ever met with.

The "company" had been organized long enough to inspire some confidence and was doing a thriving business on the following scheme, which was just a variation of what has been called the "graveyard" plan.

Any man could pay in by installments within ninety days the sum of thirty dollars and have his

life insured for one hundred, while on the day after the last payment he could draw out sixty dollars in cash, always provided he fulfilled faithfully certain conditions, the most important of which was that within thirty days he was to furnish two new members. Of course, the two new members had to do the same thing.

Some persons might think a fake like that could not win, but it did. Men with plausible tongues can start almost anything, and once get a scheme like this to going it soon grows into a regular epidemic. Where it would have ended I cannot say, had not the state insurance commissioner interfered, to the great disgust of the policy holders, who were willing and anxious each to put up the remainder of his thirty dollars in order that sixty might be drawn. The company made no great fight for life. It had been making big money while it lasted, paid its agents well, and dissolved with full pockets, leaving me improved in health, capital and general knowl-

edge of what the world wanted and was willing to pay for.

When the insurance scheme gave out I jumped the town, because I knew the law was going to step in, and I had enjoyed my fill of legal entanglements and didn't want any more. With what money I had I went down the road about twenty miles to a little station called B——. The first thing I did was to put up at the only hotel there was in town. I asked the landlord what his rates were. He took me into the dining room and showed me two tables; one was covered with white cloth and the other with Turkey red. Pointing to the white he said, "If you eat at this table it will cost you two dollars a day and you get cake every meal, but if you eat over there with the boarders it will cost you three dollars per week, but you don't git no cake." I played the red for a week and came out all right; but, oh, such a hotel. It was while here looking for some light outdoor work that I fell in with a traveling horse

doctor. He had a scheme of his own and was working it to the queen's taste. I suspect that I knew more about horses than that doctor, but that is neither here nor there. He claimed to have a sure cure for hog cholera. I told him my predicament and he took me along.

His plan of treatment was to catch a hog, give him a hypodermic injection close to the tail and then turn him loose. Charges were ten cents per head.

There was chelora all around the neighborhood and for about four months we did a nice business. One day, though, a large drove of hogs we had just operated on suddenly took sick and died. The doctor heard of it in time and skipped. So did I, and we went in different directions. The last thing he did before we parted was to hand me three ten-dollar bills, and I was on earth once more.

Here I was, adrift again, with a little money, but my health not at all restored and my case be-

fore the supreme court of the United States still hanging fire. I looked around for some light, open-air business and invested in a wheel of fortune, some cigars and a license to run the thing.

Probably the reader is familiar with the instrument, though it is not so much in evidence now, I believe, as it was in those days. The anti-gambling laws of many of the states have made it a less profitable investment.

This wheel had six rows of numbers, from one to five, encircling it. I charged five cents a turn and guaranteed a prize every time. For number one I gave one cigar, for number two two cigars, and so on up to number five.

Even if a man would win five cigars, which did not occur often, I was not dangerously hurt, as I bought my stock low down, the average profits on the thousand being an enormous per cent.

There was not "big money" in the wheel, but for a small venture the returns were pretty fair, and with it as a companion I wandered over a

wide range of country, recovering my health, seeing the world and gaining more experience. A little adventure in the west will give you an idea of the sort of thing I was apt to meet with.

I took the stage for the small town of Gurnsville, and when I arrived all was excitement on account of a wagon circus which was showing there. I had not struck the show before, but imagined I was going to turn a pretty penny off the crowd which would be in attendance.

To my disgust I found the authorities were not going to allow anything that even looked like gambling. Circuses have an unholy reputation for fleecing the public with all sorts of catch games, and the city had resolved that the innocents should be protected, and reserved for the faro banks and keno tables of the town, of which I understood there were more than a sufficient supply usually in full blast. I could not get a license to run my wheel of fortune with cigars.

In those days the majority of the citizens of

Gurnsville, if they smoked, used pipes. A cigar was considered to be the mark of a dead-game sport, for the cheapest thing you could get was fifteen cents, or two for a quarter. The store-keepers and merchants had pooled their issues to a certain extent and united in a sort of trust to keep up prices. Wages were high, so they could ask big prices, not only for cigars, but for everything else.

I had about three thousand cigars with me and did not want to lose the day, so I took out a license to sell on the street in the ordinary manner. About this time I was more particular about the license than before or since. I rented a small glass case and opened a stand right near the show grounds.

I assorted the cigars, putting the light colored ones on one side and the dark on the other. The medium shade I also separated. The light ones I sold two for five cents, the dark ones five cents each, and the medium ones for ten and fifteen

cents. They were all of the same quality and cost the same price, being as low an article as I could find that had a half-way decent outside.

When the crowds began to gather about the tents, long before the hour for opening the doors, I yelled at the top of my voice, "Right this way. Two fine cigars for five cents."

People there had never paid less than fifteen cents for one cigar, and the idea of getting two for a nickel excited them. They fairly ran over each other in getting to the case.

If a straggling fellow would come up with his "best gal" on his arm I would call his attention to the better goods in the case. Of course, rather than give his girl the impression he was close-fisted, and bought cheap cigars, he would flip me a twenty-five-cent piece and take two for a quarter. I sold out those three thousand cigars slick and clean, and was sorry I had not a few thousand more. The result almost convinced me that legitimate business beats gambling every time. I

went away with about three times as much money as I could possibly have had had they allowed me to run my little old wheel of fortune.

That was doing pretty well, but see how pride goes before a fall. Having sold out, and having a pretty fair little sum of money in my pockets, I decided to turn my face from the frontier and seek a locality where I could get into something which would more rapidly add to the small fortune I had accumulated. I paid my fare and traveled like a gentleman. The stage coach in which I journeyed was held up by road agents and I was robbed of every cent I had, except the loose change in my pockets. In consideration of my semi-clerical garb, I suppose, they made no search of my person after I had handed out my wallet. In that way I saved my ticket—which included both stage and railway transportation to my destination, which was a small city, where I expected to do some business—and a few dollars in silver.

I may say here that I never saw my wheel of fortune again. I had supposed it was stowed in the boot of the stage, but when I got off it was not there. The driver promised to start it for Munro on the next stage out after he got back, but it never reached me. It seems it was started all right, though, but the stage went over the rocks at a bad place in the road and both were helplessly wrecked, while one of the horses was killed on the spot. Fortunately, there were no passengers.

When I reached Munro on the train I met with a little adventure. It so happened that a big revival meeting was in progress at the place and an outside minister was expected to arrive on my train, who was to assist the local ministers with the meeting.

Naturally, one of the members came to meet the brother; and naturally, again, he took the daily hack which regularly met the train, since it

was about a mile and a half from the station to the town.

I was the only passenger to get off, and as I had a smooth-shaven face and wore a Prince Albert coat the deacon supposed I was his man. He rushed up, greeted me cordially, grasped my grip and invited me into the hack.

I, naturally thinking he was a hotel runner (in these God-forsaken places everyone wears such a forlorn and melancholy look that it is hard to distinguish a preacher from a porter), followed without resistance.

We started off at a good gait, the way was rough, and the driver in a hurry. We were the only passengers and sat on the same seat, the front one being occupied by my valise and various packages which seemed to be in care of the driver. Time after time, as the wheels struck a particularly bad spot, my companion and I were jammed together.

Whenever this happened he would turn to me

with what seemed to be a surprised and aggrieved frown on his face and say:

"Look out, brother. Stop, stop."

Finally, after a particularly big lurch, he said positively:

"See here, now, I want you to quit."

As I was to blame no more than he for these little, unpleasant accidents, I could not understand his taking them so seriously, but I noticed that he kept getting redder in the face and madder the further we traveled.

At first I took it for a local joke and tried to laugh it off, but the more I laughed the madder he grew.

The hack was going at a rapid rate, and on turning sharply an angle in the road we were jammed into each other more savagely than ever.

This time he jumped up as quick as a flash, his eyes blazing with rage, and let forth such a torrent of words that he cut large holes in the air. Whew! He gave me the worst tongue-lashing I

ever got in my life, beating the oration of a mother-in-law. Even she would not have used the language he did, for it was scientifically applied and too strong for ordinary use.

By this time I began to smell a mouse, and, taking things calmly, induced him to explain. Then I made an investigation.

I had in my pocket a file, which I used to regulate my street torch. The point of it had worked out, and every time we were jammed together he would catch it in his side. The last time it caught him stronger than ever, causing his extreme outburst.

He looked from my face to the file, and then from my face to the file again.

Then, to my surprise, he suddenly covered his face with his hands and burst into a flood of tears. I have heard men cry, both before and since, but never a strong man weep like he did.

It did not turn me against him, but, on the contrary, I tried to console him, and so his story

came out. He was a reformed man, who kept violent passions under control only by the greatest effort; and to him it seemed he had sinned beyond pardon, and that there could be no hope for him in the future.

I told him that if a good man could not fall we would have to pray not to be led into temptation, and wound up with:

"My dear brother, God knows what has happened; you know and I know. We three understand. The rest of the world might not. Let us keep it among ourselves, and decide that anything of the kind shall not happen again."

I think, perhaps, that little incident did us both good, though the preacher was more than ever abashed when he learned that I was not a brother clerico, but a traveling—I never explained to him what, for fear the lesson I had read him might be thrown away.

CHAPTER XIV.

TEMPERANCE TOWN AND COLD TEA RACKET —BUSTED AGAIN—MONEY MAKING SCHEMES —THE SHOEMAKER COULDN'T SLEEP—GOING BACK TO STREET WORK—THE FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLAR MONEY DECEPTION—JEWELRY PACKAGES TO BE USED ANY OLD WAY—SOME MORE STREET JOKES—A WATCH AND CHAIN FOR TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

The ensuing weeks were possibly the most varied and really the most eventful of my career.

There was no time to be choice. Being broke and far away from headquarters, I was forced to spread myself after any and every fashion that presented itself; and I found that the most foolish and harmless of fakes sometimes presented very handsome returns.

Bless your soul, I never was at fault. I filled a nice lot of bottles with clear water, put in a

cent's worth of flavoring extract, and sold it as an electric face wash—price ten cents per bottle. Used according to directions I haven't a doubt it did all that it was guaranteed to do. Clear water, fresh air, a good conscience and a whole lot of imagination "will do heaps."

I sold a renovating liquid, made from vinegar, salt and ammonia, at twenty-five cents per bottle.

A little receipt for mixing gold paint did fairly well. At one time I sold candy as an anti-coal oil explosive, getting five cents for three small pieces. When you are in hard luck and away from home it don't pay to be too particular, and everything was fish that came into my net. Handle coal oil the way I told 'em and there would never be any explosion, anyway.

One day while making my rounds with my anti-explosives I dropped into a shoe shop and found the cobbler to be a little, dried-up, sickly old man, who was afflicted with some nervous ailment which kept him from sleeping. In telling

me his tale of woe he mentioned the fact that he had not slept any for three nights. I told him, sympathizingly, that I was once troubled in the same way, but was now entirely cured. I further stated that I had a bottle of medicine, and if he wanted it he could have it at just what it cost me, as I had not needed it for several years. Though he would not go to a doctor he was only too glad to get from me something which promised relief. I told him I would just slip around to the hotel and get the bottle; and leaving him went to a druggist, who put me up a sleeping draught, for which he charged me seventy cents. My friend, the cobbler, paid me one dollar, and the next day delightfully told me had just had the best night's rest he had known for years.

In this way I went on, and it was on this trip that I struck a town in a temperance, or "Maine law," state where the county fair was in progress.

I bought a permit to sell temperance drinks on

the grounds, for I had found where I could buy a lot of empty beer and whisky bottles. I had a stall or pen for my use, and placing four wash-tubs almost filled with ice in the darkest corner, where they could scarcely be seen, I loaded my bottles with good, strong, cold tea and packed them on ice. In front I had a small stock of pop and some real, red circus lemonade. There is a fortune in the latter itself, if you can only sell enough of it.

In temperance towns, when you walk into a drug store and call for "cold tea," the clerk knows what you mean and winks when he hands you the liquor. When I began to yell, "Right this way, gentlemen, for your cold tea; and here you have your ice cold lemonade. Here you have your California pop, and the coldest tea you ever tackled." The crowd flocked around, and I did a land office business.

Of course, as soon as a man tasted his tea he tumbled to the racket; but as it was a good joke

he would smile to himself and not give it away. If some unsuspecting stranger would walk up and call for beer I would tell him, with a wink, "We don't keep beer nor whiskey, but I have some lemonade and awfully nice 'cold tea.' He would tumble, as he supposed, and take cold tea in his'n, stick the bottle in his hip pocket, and walk off with a smile on his face as big as a Kansas City ham. I sold the beer bottles at twenty-five cents each and the whiskey bottles (pints) at fifty. I am afraid to say how much were my profits. You can guess.

Though I may seem to have been successful in my schemes—and I was—yet they were small ones, parts of the country I was in were poor, and when I had worked around to a broader field I was still short of capital, and undecided about settling down on any particular line. I believe I was at my lowest ebb for about a year, in which I worked all sorts of things. I traveled as a renovator, cleaning clothing, hats and garments when

I had to, but preferring to sell the liquid which did the work. I gave away little packages of medicine, and sold with them a book for twenty-five cents, which was supposed to be a treatise on the anatomy of man. At one time I was a professional carpet cleaner, who guaranteed to clean a carpet without pain and remove grease while the customer waited. I used to clean a spot by way of sample, and then sell the stuff to do the rest. I had a furniture polish which was handled on the same plan. I sold rugs by installments, and was the originator of the scheme of selling watches on the street, the price payable by installments. I worked about three months at that, going backward and forward to make my collections, and finding it paid fairly well. Then there was the cologne and perfumery fake. The articles were done up in fancy packages, in which was enclosed a circular. These were distributed from door to door, and so well was the circular worded that on calling the next day for the money

or package it was generally the money. The price was seventy-five cents a package, or one dollar and a quarter for two.

There was the advertising directory scheme, which could be handled without much danger of failure if you could find a field which had not been occupied. Every one wants a directory of the city and county if it can be had at a reasonable price, and advertisers will take space enough to make good profit. There were plenty of things for a bustling man to turn his attention to, and as my health became re-established more firmly, my head began to rise above water.

One day I figured up my cash and found I had more than one hundred dollars, and decided to send for a stock of goods.

I always was successful at street selling, and though I made the bulk of my money in other lines, at this particular time my preference lay in that direction. There was something fascinating in gathering a crowd; to change its cold, marble

stare into one of eager expectancy; to warm it up to the highest pitch, and bring the coin rolling in through the power of my own magnetic eloquence.

You can make up your mind that, though some men may be proof against your most seductive wiles, the mass of them are not. Pack men closely together, start up the battery of your personal magnetism, and you will get somebody under control. Then the fire will spread from him to another, and so on, until the mass of the throng are just as much your victims as though they had resigned themselves to a hypnotic doctor on the stage.

There are dozens of ways in which a crowd can be prepared for this influence and by which it can be maintained. Take the pretended money deception. That operates along this line. I used to carry a lot of dummy stacks of coin money.

They were put up to resemble piles of silver dollars and five and ten and twenty-dollar gold

pieces, and looked like stacks of real money. To all appearance I would have thousands and thousands of dollars stacked up in front of me in the carriage, and I found that its presence helped me out wonderfully in holding and magnetizing a crowd. They would stand around, gazing at this money and wanting to see what I was going to do with it, until they forgot all about it in their interest in something else. But all the same I had started their expectant attention, and by and by they were ready to see the green cheese in the moon. With such an evidence of wealth in sight they were ready to believe in the value of almost anything I presented.

I also used an imitation of paper money with the same effect.

When I got fairly in the swing of "giving away" goods I would say:

"Don't imagine, gentlemen, that I am traveling simply for personal profit made now and at your expense. I am introducing these goods. That's

all there is to it. The firm I am with represents millions, and I have all the money of my own that I know what to do with. I don't need yours. You can see for yourselves my very clothes are lined with it."

Then I would pull out bundles of this green paper from every pocket, piling them on the table in front of me, and perhaps seeming to light a cigar with a ten or twenty-dollar bill.

This particular time I sold jewelry packages and after giving some kind of an interlude I would say to the crowd:

"Now, gentlemen, I have traveled over every state and territory in this glorious union, and in all foreign lands; I am known the world over as whole-souled, honest, liberal Jim, the man who gives goods away. I am going to show you to-night that I deserve the title. You've done considerable for me; I'm going to do something for you.

"Here is a genuine, black kid purse with four-

teen rivets. It would cost you in the regular way fifty-five cents. Here are a pair of patent lever collar buttons, that should cost you at least half a dollar. I'll just drop them into the little pocket book. Here I have a beautiful wedding ring, warranted solid brass. You'll notice I don't make misrepresentations. We'll say that this wedding ring is worth a nickel, and drop it also into the purse, like this. Then, we'll go right down here and get a pair of these beautiful, agate setting cuff buttons, that any jeweler in the world would charge you a great big dollar for. We'll drop them into the little purse and call the whole outfit two dollars. Don't forget. They are a fortune in themselves, magnetic and diretic, and can be used internally, externally, eternally and everlastingly.

"Does any one want them for two dollars?

"No? Well, I'll tell you what more I'll do. I've only got about a dozen of these little outfits and I am determined to get rid of them tonight.

I'll do it, too, if I have to throw 'em away. But, hold on. I'll see what I can find. Here is a little diamond stud that I'd give a dollar for myself. I'll just drop that into the purse and call it three dollars. Last, but not least, I'll go right down here and get one of these beautiful, elegant, genuine, double-linked, aluminum chains, with a patent bar and swivel on each end. If you can go to any store in your city and get one for less than a three-dollar bill I'll make you a present of one hundred dollars. I'll just drop the chain into the little purse here and call the outfit six dollars, altogether.

"Now, gentlemen, don't get scared or faint away, but the first man who passes me up a quarter gets the entire outfit, purse, magnetic agate, studs, ring, collar buttons and chain. Only twenty-five cents for the entire lot. Ah! There is the man who takes it. Now, for another lot, and then we'll see if we can't find something else."

It was not more than a half bad scheme to

praise the town, telling how much you liked it, and what noble, whole-souled, up-to-date, generous business citizens they had. With all the evidences of wealth in front of me, some such gag as this always caught the heart of the crowd.

"I tell you, gentlemen, you've got a grand town here, a noble town. You can imagine that I love it, because when I struck the place but a week or two ago I was clean, dead broke. That's a tough way for a fellow to be, but for a fact I didn't have a cent.

"And look at me now. I walked up to the St. James hotel and registered. I told the proprietor, Johnson—you all know him, square as a die and as good a man as ever lived—what a predicament I was in, and struck him for a job, stating, too, that I was an old, experienced hotel man.

"He said he would hire me, and put me to work in the dining room as a waiter. Perhaps some of you remember my first appearance there.

"At dinner time the guests began crowding

around the table, and after taking about six orders at once I picked up my tray and rushed into the kitchen.

"On my way back I slipped on a banana peeling and fell, with my whole load, to the floor.

"The landlord came running in, mad as a hornet, and said: 'Get out of this, quick as you can, you blankety-blank fool; I've got enough of you. I can't have any of your confounded gambling in this house.'

"I got up and begged for a new trial, but he was obstinate, and told me I ought to have better sense than to gamble in the dining room before all the guests.

" 'Gambling?' said I.

" 'Yes, gambling,' said he.

" 'Well,' said I, 'how do you figure that out?'

" 'Why,' answered he, 'you had a tray full and you dropped your pile.' "

As I always picked out a landlord who was known to sometimes dally with the seductive

jackpot, and knew, too, the value of a bob-tail flush, the story was sure to make a hit.

I would then go on.

"Ladies and gentlemen, if I was not afraid of exciting your sympathies I would sing you a sentimental song I have in my repertoire. It is so mesmeric in its nature and electrical in its action that I most generally like to leave it out, or until the last thing, for fear I might be overpowered like the rest of you. I sang it in Boonsville last week and nothing was good enough for me; and if they hadn't needed them themselves I think they would have even taken off the old shoes from their feet to throw into the wagon. Silver? Silver wasn't in it. They just filled this carriage with golden eggs, and they tossed me at least a hundred bouquets, each one tied to a brick. The title of this morceau is: 'Biddy's Got a Corn on Her Nose.'

As they always liked to laugh I kept the comic stories going, even if they were old and common

property among the fakir fraternity. Perhaps I would go on in this fashion:

"I want to tell you of a little experience with my wife, a month before we were married. I had been calling on her for several years and she was the chilliest, most icy proposition you ever heard of. She never would let me kiss her. When I finally proposed she said: 'I'll marry you on one condition.'

" 'What's that?' said I.

"She replied that if I would run her a foot race and catch her she would be mine. The only condition she made was that I was to give her one hundred yards the start.

"Of course, I accepted. We started. She ran up one street and down the next, through alleys, buildings, stairways and everything that came along. Whew! But that girl was a runner. When I reached one corner I would just get a glimpse of her making the turn in the block ahead.

"Just as I was about to give up in despair I saw her run into a big church.

"Like a whirlwind I tore after her and found a big revival meeting in progress. When I reached the center of the middle aisle the preacher, who was in the midst of the sermon, looked up and shouted to me:

" 'What's the matter, brother? Are you looking for salvation?'

" 'No,' I yelled back, 'I'm looking for Sal Skinner.'

"I will now sing you another beautiful lyric, most sentimental and touching, entitled, ' 'Tis Only a Chunk of Kindling from My Sweetheart's Wooden Leg.' "

I varied the purse scheme for disposing of jewelry with a fake that was quite successful, seldom made trouble, and which offered a fair amount of money.

I had got hold of a little toy watch that I thought was really a bargain. It looked for the

world like a real one, and at wholesale it cost me just seven cents. To each one I attached a chain that cost eight cents and then placed them in fancy, red lined paper boxes, all ready for offering to the public.

In addition to my own vocal and instrumental performances I usually had the specialties of one or two musical comedians to attract and hold the crowd so that I could keep it with me during the entire sale. You will notice in the argument that I used I made my strong talk on the watch, but sold the chain.

"Now, gentlemen," I would say, "before we close our entertainment I wish to address you for a few moments and explain still further why I am here.

"You might naturally presume that I was simply a street fakir by profession, who was out here for your money. But, my friends, such is not the case. I am not traveling for money, nor my

health, nor am I traveling on my shape. If I was I would have been soaped long before this.

"But, strange as it may seem, I am now spending my time and wasting my lungs for the sole purpose of giving goods away.

"I am going to give every man here tonight who is so fortunate as to get one a nice, new watch. Yes, actually give it to him, free of charge. The watches are manufactured in Boston by one of the most reliable concerns in that city, and in order to introduce them to the public they have hired me to advertise them in this manner, and given me positive instructions not to charge a cent for the watches.

"These chronometers have, as you see, genuine hunting cases. They are not a full jeweled watch, but they are stem-winders and stem-set, with as pretty a dial and second hand as any high-priced watch on the market.

"And while I think of it, I want to tell you a little experience a man had in Tirbyville a short

time ago. I was on the streets there, working as I am tonight. The gentleman I refer to was in the crowd and I gave him one of these watches. He traded it the next day for a horse, traded the horse for a diamond stud, traded the diamond stud for a very valuable town lot, traded the lot for a farm, struck oil on his farm, and then sold out for sixty thousand dollars. What do you think of that for a speculation? If you don't think that's a lie I'll tell you another one.

"But this isn't giving away watches, is it? Now, I am going to surprise you still further by putting a chain with each watch. You see, gentlemen, I am one of the most liberal men you ever saw; and you'll think so, too, before I get through here tonight. I just want to explain a little about these chains and then I will hand the goods out to you.

"Several years ago a prominent mining expert was prospecting in the Asiatic mines. While hunting through the hills one day he ran across a

very peculiar looking metal. It looked like gold, and stood all the tests for gold, but it was so soft and mushy that his long experience told him it could not be gold.

"His curiosity being aroused, he took his knife and cut out a chunk, just as you would a piece of butter, and carried it back to camp.

"Arriving there he opened his package, when, lo and behold, it had turned hard as a rock and red as the prettiest piece of gold nugget you ever saw.

"More surprised than ever, he sent it to his native city, New York, for examination.

"The scientists there put their heads together and decided that it was in every way better than the original gold.

"A company was immediately formed and the metal was shipped to this country in large quantities. Today, my friends, all kinds of articles are manufactured from it. This little chain which I hold in my hand is made from this metal, that is

known all the civilized world over as Asiatic aluminum gold.

"Now, a few words more and I am done. In handing these out I wish to make an explanation. I have only about thirty watches and thirty chains, and if I were to hand them out right and left promiscuously I would not have enough to go around. Besides that, I might put some of them in the hands of unscrupulous men.

"So, in order to avoid that, and protect myself, and have the watches go to people who are honest and appreciative, I will put a very small price on the chain, and nothing on the watch.

"If you were to go to the jewelry store and buy one of these chains it would cost you from three to five dollars. Now, I shall not attempt to charge any such price, but, to make a long story short, I will put them down to the little, in-sig-nif-i-cent sum of twenty-five cents. Remember, the watch goes free, and the first man who passes me up a quarter gets the outfit. Ah, there's a man wants

a bargain, and he'll get one, too. Here, sir, is your change. Who's the next lucky man?"

All the time the quarters were rolling in I kept reminding the people that there were only about thirty watches and chains, though in reality I would have been glad to put out an unlimited number. When I was sold out I gave the promised entertainment, and all went their several ways rejoicing.

Thus I traveled, and schemed, and fought for fortune. If there was anything new on the wholesale market I had it; and it was surprising what a variety of articles for street selling I managed to pick up. It is unnecessary to say that I handled them clear up to the limit of artistic skill.

But, after all, one gets tired of this sort of thing, though I varied my schemes as often as I thought I could make better money.

I found, too, that what won one week was a failure the next, and with even what seemed a success the bank account which every fakir

yearns to have was slow to grow. For that reason, when I seemed to have skimmed the cream off one thing, I tried something else, falling back on old schemes when it was necessary or profitable.

Several times I organized medicine companies and gave entertainments in the opera houses, carrying along a physician with whom the public could have free consultation. Several times I got out of such schemes by selling good will and fixtures, thus quitting them anything but a gainer.

Nevertheless, there were other lines to work, and I tried them all, with the idea that one thing was as good as another, and perhaps I might find something a little better. When I discovered that street selling seemed to be telling on my throat I got back to canvassing again.

CHAPTER XV.

SELLING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS—TRICKERY AND DECEPTION—LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW—SELLING THE ROASTER—THE CANVASS.

I got to selling pianos and organs by the merest chance.

I was canvassing with a furniture polish, which was really a very good thing, and one day went into a store where musical instruments were sold, hoping to do a stroke of business. I did, and a very good stroke of business I made of it.

The dealer had some talk with me, apparently liked my style, and finally offered me very good terms to work for him a scheme he had in view. He thought I knew enough about the instrument to handle pianos successfully in the way he proposed.

He had several Beatem pianos, which were listed at a high figure, but which he had obtained

at a large discount. So far, he had been unable to sell them, and as he was well known he did not care to manage the fake he thought of suggesting to me. He offered to fix me up in style, and pay my expenses and big wages, if I would go to a city not far away, representing myself as from Beatem and attend to the disposing of a piano through the Woman's charity organization of the town. I jumped at the chance, and went to Tirbyville, splendidly dressed and in every way well equipped for the scheme.

When the piano had come I called upon the president of the society and made known the fact that I was representing the Beatem Piano Company of New York; that their pianos were of the finest kind, and that the firm had adopted a new way of introducing them. Instead of paying big money to the newspaper men, I had instructions to give the benefit of all the profits to some charitable association; in fact, I was in town for the purpose of giving away some of them now. The

instrument was here, on exhibition and trial, and what we wanted to do was to call attention to it. At the same time, of course, we were more than gratified at the chance of doing a little good. I wanted to advertise the pianos, not to sell them; and in order to hurry the affair through as quickly as possible, I was going to offer special inducements to those taking an interest in the matter.

I then stated that the instrument was worth eight hundred dollars, and the best way to determine its destination was to raffle it off at one dollar per chance. I would have eight hundred tickets printed, and the W. C. O. was to have twenty per cent. of the proceeds for managing the affair. As a still greater inducement for the ladies to assist in the scheme for getting the piano before the country, we intended to give a twenty-dollar gold piece to the lady who sold the greatest number of tickets, and ten dollars for the next.

I knew the scheme could not fail. The ladies

took hold and worked like beavers, attending to the sale of the tickets, and likewise to the drawing. On my side I saw that an advertisement like this appeared in the regular reading matter of the local papers:

"The finest piano in the world.

"Tirbyville enjoys the reputation of having the finest amateur musical talent of any town in the state, and Beatem Bros. of New York have the reputation of making the best pianos in the United States.

"A representative of this firm is now in our city with one of their samples. In order to introduce their goods he will give away one of their superb instruments.

"It will be raffled off under the auspices of the Woman's Charity Organization, the tickets selling for the nominal sum of one dollar.

"The piano is a gem, costing eight hundred dollars direct from the factory. It is now on exhibition at Kirby Bros.' music store, where the

musically inclined public is invited to call. Professor S. James Weldon will be there at all hours, ready to explain the merits of the piano, and our citizens will do well to call. The worthy charity organization reaps the benefit of the drawing, and we trust our citizens will liberally subscribe."

It took about six weeks to work up this scheme, but it paid well. After deducting the twenty per cent. commission, prize money and personal expenses, I went away with about one hundred dollars profit for my employer, who at once sent me to another place to work the racket over again on the same lines.

I succeeded in exhausting his stock of Beatem pianos in this way, largely to his profit, and fairly to my own. When there were no more pianos he tried me on organs, and I remained with him quite a while.

Sometimes I disposed of the organs by the lottery scheme, and sometimes canvassed through

the country to sell them outright. Either way I made money out of the proposition.

I remember that I once called on a farmer who, I knew, was a close buyer. He had two buxom daughters, who, besides feeding the chickens, milking the cows, and churning the butter, found time to play "Home, Sweet Home," on the organ. They had none of their own, and wanted one awfully bad.

I exerted myself to the fullest to make the sale, but did not—until I was almost ready to throw up my hands.

As a last resort I succeeded by a bit of trickery. I took out a piece of paper and began figuring on it, remarking:

"Mr. Farmer, I am going to figure on the actual net manufacturer's cost of this instrument, and then I may be able to make you another proposition."

After figuring for a while I said:

"This organ never sold under one hundred and

fifty dollars, but if you want it you can have it for one hundred and twelve dollars and forty-five cents. That is just about what it cost, but as I don't want to take it back to town with me you can have it for that price. You consider the offer while I am out watering my team and when I come back give me your answer."

With that I started for the door, carelessly thrusting the slip of paper into my pocket. Accidently (on purpose) it fell to the floor, and I went on without noticing it. Of course, he picked up the paper and looked it over, seeing that, according to my own figures, the organ cost just one hundred and five dollars and fifty cents.

Poor, unsuspecting man, when I came back, thinking he had the drop on me, he said:

"Say, young fellow, I'll give you an even hundred dollars for that organ. What do you say?"

Of course, I hesitated and talked a lot, but finally gave in. The organ stood us, counting freight charges and all, an even eighty dollars.

The greatest objection I had to handling musical instruments was that the work was not sufficiently "rapid and devilish." I think I rather preferred to handle organs, because I made more sales, even if the profits were so much less on three or four of them than on one piano. A hundred dollars coming at the end of three or four weeks was not as enticing as less money, coming by closer installments.

It was a money-maker for me, but I eventually grew tired of the business. There was too much hard work in handling those large, heavy organs, and besides the disadvantage of traveling in all kinds of weather and putting up with inferior accommodations in farm houses, made it more than unpleasant. I drove into town one day determined at least to take a little lay-off and figure on something that would be more to my liking—perhaps go back to street selling again.

It generally happened that when I quit one thing another showed up right at my hands.

Probably it was because I was looking for it.

Quite accidently I came across a canvasser. He actually tried to obtain my subscription to that, at one time, highly popular journal, The Weekly Rooster, and if I had not been too much in the same line myself I think he might have made it.

We had quite a talk about the paper, from his point of view, and I decided to try my hand at it, for a time at least.

I found more trouble in making arrangements than I had anticipated. I would have to be trusted to handle quite an amount of money, and the firm required a bond or strong references.

I had no references nor bondsmen whom I cared to give, but I ultimately arranged by putting up a cash deposit, and after quite a lengthy correspondence, during which I was several times tempted to throw up my hands, I secured sample copies and a certified subscription book and went to work.

The "Rooster" was a twenty page illustrated

paper, the subscription price being six dollars, in advance, per year. As special inducements, fifty-two paper back novels—one with each issue of the paper—were offered, and a set of six cloth bound volumes. If preferred, however, they took installments of fifty cents per month, and that was the liberal proposition I principally worked on. Very little trickery was necessary to obtain orders.

For my "mark" I first selected a well known individual, well up in public esteem; say, for instance, a merchant of high standing. Walking into his place of business I would say to one of the clerks near the door, "Is the proprietor in?"

"Yes, sir. Yonder is Mr. Denim."

Agent (walking up to the proprietor).—"Pardon me, but are you Mr. Denim?"

Mr. D.—"That's my name, sir."

Agent.—"I am representing the Weekly Illustrated Rooster of New York and I want to put you down for a year's subscription."

Mr. D.—"Don't want it. I'm taking too many papers now."

Agent.—"Let me explain a little. The former manager of our paper died some months ago, and while the matter was kept up to its former high standard the business end was neglected, subscriptions expired without any effort to obtain renewals, and consequently half of our advertising got away from us. Now, a new man has taken hold, enlarged the paper, added new departments, and is offering special inducements in order to build up again. I am under contract to get seventeen thousand new subscribers in this state, and I'll get them, if I have to give things away myself and be discharged for it."

Mr. D. (growing interested).—"What sort of a paper is it?"

When you bring a man into the confidential history of a thing he at once begins to imagine that in some way he must belong to it.

Agent.—"It is a beautiful, clean, twenty paged

paper, illustrated, and with sixteen departments. The news covers every form and condition of life, with accurate and thrilling pictures of the passing show. The bulk of the articles are of an editorial nature, being instructive, interesting and amusing. We have sixty-seven special correspondents in all parts of the world, who contribute regularly each week; and special articles are given from the best known pens in the universe. It is far above all contemporaneous sheets and costs no more."

Mr. D.—"How much a year?"

Agent.—"Only six dollars."

Mr. D.—"Isn't that a little high?"

Agent.—"It might be considered so for the paper alone, but when you take into consideration the fact that we give with each yearly subscription the entire 'Rooster Series' of fifty-two novels, by all the standard authors, books which would cost you twenty-five to fifty cents at the

regular news dealers, the price is reasonable enough, after all. Don't you think so?"

Mr. D.—"I'll admit that it is a nice offer, but I guess I'll have to pass it by this time."

Agent.—"You are one of the pillars of the town, and I hate to let such a good man go."

Mr. D.—"There are plenty of good men here besides me."

Agent.—"Yes, I know; but not the same, either. You are recognized as one of the leaders, and your name heading my list would give me a prestige."

Mr. D. (smiling).—"How do you know I am one of the leaders?"

Agent.—"I was told so by another prominent citizen. I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Mr. Denim; I will give you free of charge a set of six elegant, cloth bound volumes, all standard works, if you will subscribe for the paper. Of course, this is a confidential proposition, for the sake of

obtaining your influence and to have your name at the top of my list."

Mr. D.—"All right, then. Put my name down."

This little scheme of tickling a man's vanity worked every time when the individual approached had any vanity at all to tickle. As I usually averaged ten subscribers every day my profits ought to have been highly satisfactory—and so they were for some months, and it was only when there was a change in the liberal policy of the Rooster, including the cutting down of commissions fifty per cent., and also taking away the premiums, that I thought it time to take hold of something else. By this time I had a fair little bank account.

I had acquired the taste of canvassing for reading matter, and from this on to reading matter I stuck, save at odd times when I picked up again almost any old thing and made it pay while I looked around and drew breath. I believe my

next venture was in selling bibles, and I dropped into it while corresponding with eastern houses with a view to selling their books. While awaiting developments in that line this new one came to my hand.

CHAPTER XVI.

SELLING BIBLES—SELLING BOOKS—WHAT WAS SAID—WORKING THE CUSTOMERS—CURIOSITY—PUBLIC MEETINGS AND LIBRARY CLUBS.

It was altogether an accident that I ever got into bible selling. I stumbled across a man who was probably in many respects better fitted than I to handle the business.

Unfortunately for him, he was overtaken by sickness, and I did him a favor in financial as well as other ways when I allowed him for a time to turn his employment over to me. Of course, I went at it as a simple business proposition, and brought to bear all my resources rather than to lose a customer. They say if a man can't use his tongue he may as well shut up shop. As I never had any difficulty in the former, I never was compelled to do the latter for any other purpose than

temporary repairs. The agent told me what to say and gave me all his business methods.

The way I worked an ordinary sale was something like this:

After trying to lead my man into conversation, I would spring the real subject of my talk quite suddenly.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Smith, how would you like to have a nice family bible?"

Mr. Smith.—"A bible, eh? Oh, I have the old bible that mother gave us when we were married."

Agent.—"Yes, I know. But we have a bible that discounts anything you ever heard of. It is a facsimile of an English bible that sells across the water for forty-five dollars. We are only charging twenty-two, and you pay only three dollars a month, without interest. It is the finest thing on the market today. Other publishers are dying to get our secret, because we are selling at

less than it would cost them to manufacture the same article.

Mr. Smith.—"Your bible must be a mighty fine one to cost twenty-two dollars."

Agent.—"Right you are. In the first place, it is printed on the very finest quality of white linen paper. Its cover is a superior quality of Morocco leather; the type is large and clean; the full-page engravings are executed on steel in the finest manner; it has the old as well as the new testament, enriched with parallel references and a fine biblical dictionary referred to in marginal notes. In addition to all this, it has elegant blanks for a marriage certificate, and a family record, together with the illuminated Lord's prayer and the ten commandments, all on separate and decorated pages. To cap the whole thing and to give this bible a special 'tone,' there is a Swiss music box in it which plays twelve different hymns. Every time you open the bible you have the benefit of a choir, and if you ever feel like staying home from

church just take down the good book, have your little boy fall asleep by the fire, and you'll have a 'meeting' of your own—psalms, hymns, services and all. Why, man, it is the most complete and beautiful thing of the kind you ever saw, and if you don't agree with me, on your honor, I'll give you fifty dollars."

Mr. Smith.—"Whew. You're a long-winded feller. I know that bible is fine, but I just haven't got the money for it."

Agent.—"You'll admit a good bible, clear type, solid binding, spring back and up-to-date is something every Christian household should possess; and how often are you called upon to invest in one? Once in a lifetime; anl when you do, you ought to buy carefully. A good bible is like every first-class article. It pays for itself in the long run, and the difference in price is always well worth paying. Think of the satisfaction of owning a genuine good article, that you will not have to replace in a lifetime. Besides, it is a

staple ornament in a man's home and speaks for his morals and fear of the Lord—which, you know, is the beginning of wisdom. Better let me put your name down."

Mr. Smith (hesitatingly).—"I ought to see Maria first."

Agent.—"This is the time you don't want to see Maria, because you want to surprise her. This bible business is a new venture with us, and this is my first trip out. But next trip I want to do an immense business, and I would like to get a book in here as a sort of an advance advertisement. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you won't say a word about it to a soul, and will give me your order, I'll knock off seven dollars from the price and make it an even fifteen dollars. And I'll also cut the payments to five cents per day—just one little, round nickel every twenty-four hours—till it's all done and paid for. And I'll tell you, my friend, if I ever expected to be prosperous and have what the world calls a run of good luck it

would be while I was buying a bible. What do you say?"

Mr. Smith.—"Well, that certainly looks fair enough, and there's a good deal in what you say. I guess I'll put my name down."

Agent.—"Thanks, sir, thank you; understand, the only reason I am giving you this bargain is that I can refer others to you when I come around again."

Mr. Smith.—"Oh, yes, I understand."

Agent.—"I know you have the best bargain you ever made. My word is as good as law, though, and I'll not back out. Good day."

That was the sum and substance of the argument, varying it at all times to suit the occasion.

Selling bibles was easy work, for the most part carried on with good people, and at a good profit —it may seem strange that I did not follow it longer than I did. I thought it a little strange myself. I do not believe it was superstition that drove me out of the traffic, but if you were to

say that it was I might not know so well how to answer you. Anyhow, I quit it and took up with a general line of books.

In the first place, this bible business was only temporary, and done only to help the sick agent out. Next, as stated in the previous chapter, I had made arrangementts for this line; and, third, I knew there was better chance of making big money in handling a line of standard authors. So I quit the bible and paper and went to the miscellaneous books.

The firm I worked for published the complete works of many standard authors. There were no single volumes on my list, and if I remember right the smallest set was a history of the world in four volumes.

As samples for canvassing the firm furnished each agent with a nice stretcher, showing up the backs of each set of books complete. These stretchers, or book backs, were gotten up in a very neat and tasty manner, and when set up against

the wall looked just like a complete set of the books would appear when arranged in a book case. I would walk up to a business or professional man without giving him any advance knowledge of what I wanted. In general, I stated my business in a roundabout, though apparently off-hand, manner, gradually leading up to the vital point, finally saying to him:

"I am going to get up a library club here among the literary lights of the town and I want you in it."

Customer (pleased at the compliment).—"I didn't know that I was a literary light."

Agent.—"Oh, yes you are. You have distinctly that reputation. In fact, I heard about you before I came to town."

Customer.—"Who told you so?"

Agent.—"Why, two or three parties in M—. up here told me to be sure and call on you. My manager in New York also sent me a list of twenty prominent people here, and your name was

among them. So, you see, you are known on the outside as well as in your own town."

Customer.—"I don't see how you fellows find everything out."

Agent (jokingly).—"Oh, you know, 'murder will out.' "

Customer.—"You are right there, but I don't understand what you mean by a Library Club."

Agent.—"I'll tell you. It is a scheme that gives you a chance of getting a library of your own which will cost you virtually nothing."

Customer.—"I still don't understand."

Agent.—"I'll explain further. You know that it is the working for single customers, or hunting them up and delivering, that makes the book business so expensive. Quick sales and small profits put quite a different face on the matter. Now, here is a new edition of Roberts' works in twelve large volumes. It contains all the products of this famous author's pen, and is the only complete set ever published. One set, regular price,

costs twenty-four dollars, but if I can get up a club for twenty sets, in this town or vicinity, I'll cut the price right in two, prepay the expressage and deliver them for twelve dollars. You can pay for them in little monthly payments of say one dollar and a half per month, and the entire set delivered at one time and in advance. Did you ever hear of a better offer?"

Customer.—"Well, it does sound pretty nice."

Agent.—"By the way, do you know anything about Roberts' works?"

Customer.—"I have heard of them."

Agent.—"Roberts is now recognized as one of the leading writers and a standard authority. He was at one time a prominent officer in the English navy, and in that capacity traveled all over the world. His works are based on historical facts and personal observation. He takes you into all the different countries, and gives you more pointers in history than any other living writer. He also opens channels heretofore unexplored. The

beauty of Roberts is that he is instructive as well as interesting. I tell you, he is fine, and no one could appreciate a set of his works better than yourself."

Customer.—"I dare say, but I have a lot of books now that I never read. I don't get the time."

Agent.—"My friend, even if you don't read yourself you will admit that a library is a valuable addition to any home. You are in a position to appreciate the fact, since you are a married man; and as this proposition is such a fair one you should not hesitate to increase your store. So far as not having time to read—you are not supposed to sit down and regularly read the edition through. Skim them over, culling as you go, and when you need a fact you know where to find it. Jay Gould had a library of 83,000 volumes. Do you suppose he read every one of them? The fact is, while you prefer one thing your wife likes another, and the children still prefer others. Every

one has his or her own individual taste in reading, and that is where the advantage comes in having an extensive collection. You know good reading sharpens a man's intellect and enlarges his knowledge. Better let me put your name down."

Customer.—"Perhaps I will, but not right away. You go ahead and see what success you meet with and then come back to me."

Agent (undismayed).—"I'll tell you another good point about Roberts. His language is the finest and purest ever placed on paper. Leading newspapers all over the world have clippings from Roberts. Lawyers in pleading their hardest cases quote profusely from Roberts. His portrayal of character is wonderful. When you read from him you laugh one minute and cry the next. Before you know it you are flying through the air like a feather. His is high-minded, choice reading in the fullest sense of the word, and ours is the most elaborate edition published."

Customer.—"Well, I'll think about it."

Agent.—"Did you ever read his Two Pirates?"

Customer.—"No, I think not."

Agent.—"It is considered his masterpiece and gives a history and a warning. There was once a young man by the name of Judson. He belonged to a fine old family, renowned for upright ways and aristocratic lineage. For all that the young fellow was disreputable and bad.

"Some of the members of the family, in order to save themselves from being disgraced by his actions, persuaded him to join the navy, and he was placed on board a frigate commanded by a certain Captain Shortliff.

"Judson was no sooner on board the vessel than his rogue's nature began to show itself. He conceived a sudden ambition to become a bold pirate, and concocted a scheme to murder all the officers, take command of the vessel, turn it into an ocean rover, and kill and plunder on the high seas.

"He found among the crew plenty of willing

hands to join him in the conspiracy, and it was settled among them that those who would not agree to come under the black flag were to be quietly murdered and their bodies thrown overboard.

"The scheme was about ripe for consummation when it was discovered by Captain Shortliff. Judson and his first lieutenant were placed in irons, while the principal officers of the frigate held a consultation concerning what course it was best for them to pursue.

"It was decided that the best thing to insure the vessel's safety was to hang the two rogues, and this, accordingly, was done.

"Two months later, having arrived at headquarters, the captain gave himself over to the naval authorities, reporting the fearful adventure.

"He was court martialed, but later on it was decided under the circumstances he could have

taken no other course, and the court fully exonerated him.

"Based upon these facts, General Roberts, who was a personal friend of Shortliff, wrote his most realistic novel. Now, don't you think you would like to read all about the "Two Pirates?"

Customer.—"The story is extremely interesting, but—you'll be around again, won't you?"

Agent.—"No, I never make a second call on the same man. You know the old saying, 'Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.'"

Customer.—"Oh, there are a great many old sayings. We don't have to follow them."

Agent.—"Well, then, laying all jokes aside, I'll tell you what I'll do. You can't blame me for trying to get business when there is an opportunity in sight. If you'll give me your order without any more labor, I'll cut the payments to twenty-five cents per week. You see, our regular payments are one fifty a month, but I'll just put it down to one dollar. That will give you a

whole year to pay in, without any interest. Of course, I wouldn't want you to mention it; but I'll do it, just to make sure of a quick sale. I know if I can once get started I can hold you as a good customer in the future."

Customer.—"Well, I guess I can stand a quarter a week. Put my name down."

By asking at the outset payments of one dollar and a half per month I had room at the last to drop to one dollar. If, in the beginning, a man ordered a set, payable at the rate of five cents a day, I at once imagined him to be a good mark, and endeavored to sell him three sets at ten cents a day, or three dollars a month. I made more money in selling books than anything else I ever handled, and was awfully glad I tumbled into the business. I found from experience in this line that it was the easy terms that made the sales. With most people the only evidence of prosperity is the ability to buy, and as all desire to be pros-

perous they are willing to accept the nearest evidence in sight and buy what they can.

Along with the sales of books on the installment plan I sometimes worked the rackets known as the "Free Reading Room" or "Library Club" schemes.

Taking a town of moderate size I would solicit subscriptions from all the prominent men. For every dollar subscribed I would place in the reading room four volumes, which they were at liberty to select from a catalogue I carried.

I argued that a free reading room was a good send-off on the outside, and would also be a good thing for the town in a social way. I managed to arouse much enthusiasm, and usually had from two to four hundred dollars on my list as a result of a couple of weeks' work. Then I would turn the books over to some charitable institution or a committee and go on my way rejoicing, with a neat little sum in my pocket.

In the larger towns I organized library clubs

among the young folks, charging three dollars for a membership. With every membership secured I would put in from six to twelve volumes of standard works. If it was necessary to get the thing started in good shape I would call a meeting of the young people and pass around small envelopes. Those holding blanks had to pay for their memberships, but there would be a few holding lucky numbers, and they were entitled to join free of charge. At this meeting, guided by my experience, a regular library and social club would be organized. I would then collect my money, again being the winner by a good majority. In both of these schemes the books furnished cost me, on an average, twelve cents apiece.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADDING TO BANK ACCOUNT—LOOKED BETTER, FELT BETTER AND WAS BETTER—SELLING ENCYCLOPEDIAS—COMPLETE CANVASS—TRICKY AND PERSISTENT—ADVERTISING SCHEMES—TRICKS OF THE PRESENT DAY—DISGUISES—HOW DIFFERENT BUSINESS MEN WERE WORKED—STRATEGY.

Having found a general line of books so profitable to handle, it might be supposed that I would have stuck to that, and not experimented with exclusive work in a single line. I reasoned, however, that a large commission, made just as easily and rapidly as a small one, was a great deal better for the bank account, and so I finally switched off from the general line to the selling of forty dollar encyclopedias. While engaged in this work I made better money, came in contact with a better class of customers, looked better, felt better

and was better in bodily appearance and mental condition than I ever was before; and what was far better, I was able to put by and hold on to a far greater portion of my earnings.

In soliciting for encyclopedias I used a horse and carriage, and made a thorough, systematic canvass of every town visited. I first called on the ministers, then the other professional men, including the school teachers, winding up with all the business men that would or could buy.

This is my canvass, word for word, as it occurred. Walking into a store, I would say:

"Are you Mr. Rice?"

Mr. R.—"Yes, sir; that is my name."

Agent.—"You are the proprietor, I believe?"

Mr. R.—"Yes, sir, I am."

Agent.—"My name is Weldon; I am representing the Banner people of New York."

Mr. R.—"In what line?"

Agent.—"Selling their new encyclopedias. I understand you are quite a reader, and I thought

I would drop in and see if I could not interest you."

Mr. R.—"Times are too hard to buy encyclopedias."

Agent.—"Yes, I know times are hard."

Mr. R.—"Besides, I am not fixed to take care of a set of that kind. I could not possibly afford it."

Agent.—"Certainly, if you don't want them I won't insist, but—you know what they are, don't you."

Mr. R.—"Oh, I guess so."

Agent.—"And if you had a set in your library you would certainly appreciate them, wouldn't you?"

Mr. R.—"Of course, I would appreciate them, all right, but there is no use of talking. I can't even think of buying them now."

Agent.—"Suppose, Mr. Rice, that in the face of all your excuses, I should give you a chance to get a set for virtually nothing, do you think I

could interest you? That is a pretty strong question, but I mean it, every word. I am getting all the best people in town, and I was told to call on you."

Mr. R. (growing attentive).—"Why, of course, if they didn't cost anything I would take a set. But I will bet you are not traveling over the country for your health."

Agent.—"I do not mean that I will absolutely give a set away, but almost so. Give me half a chance and I'll make you an offer that will do your soul good."

Mr. R.—"What is your proposition?"

Agent.—"I want to explain a little before I make my proposition. You see, this is a new edition of Banner's, brought right up to date. The company advertised extensively and, figuring on doing a big business, got out seventy thousand sets. This late financial crash happened, and it came near knocking us clear out. It don't pay to keep the stock on hand, and pay taxes and in-

surance, so we are going to try and force them out, quick and cheap. Now, I'll tell you what we are going to do. The regular price of a set is seventy-two dollars, but we have cut that right in two, making it thirty-six. If you order you get the complete set at once, free of expressage, and only have to pay fifty cents a week on them until they are paid for, nothing in advance, and no interest. If that is not almost giving them away I don't know what is."

Mr. R.—"I'll admit that is a fair proposition, but I don't think I can accept it today."

Agent.—"It is a good idea for a man to be conservative, but sometimes it is policy to deviate from the regular rule. If you will sift this offer down to a fine point, take every particle of it into consideration, and compare these books with other encyclopedias, you will acknowledge yourself that even if things are not just exactly as you would like to have them, it is worth while taking hold of anyway."

Mr. R.—"Why do you claim that?"

Agent.—"For various reasons. In the first place, the total cost for so good an article don't amount to a hill of beans. Even if you paid it all down at once you wouldn't feel it, let alone paying for it in such little dribs. It is virtually nothing."

Mr. R.—"Yes, but I have too many of these little dribs."

Agent.—"I don't care how dull times are, how economical a man is, how many irons he has in the fire, or how many obligations he has on hand, there are always little incidental expenses during the month that are met without a murmur."

Mr. R.—"Even if I bought the books I would still have those outlays."

Agent.—"You are right, but I want to ask you one question. You make up your mind now to practice economy. If you were walking down the street and felt like drinking a glass of lemonade

or smoking a cigar wouldnt you go right in and spend ten or fifteen cents for the luxury?"

Mr. R.—"Yes, certainly, if I felt like it."

Agent.—"You play billiards and pool occasionally, do you not?"

Mr. R.—"Yes, frequently."

Agent.—"And you sometimes lose the game—one can't always win?"

Mr. R.—"I am no expert; I often lose."

Agent.—"If some ladies were to come in here now, soliciting for a church charity, you would dig up a couple of dollars without a struggle, wouldn't you?"

Mr. R.—"Yes, but it's policy to do that."

Agent.—"So I acknowledge, but I am just illustrating how money goes. If you felt like dropping in at the theatre you wouldn't stay away because business was a little slack. You would take your wife and go to the play and enjoy the evening, wouldn't you?"

Mr. R.—"I do that frequently, but, then, one must have a little diversion."

Agent.—"That is what I mean by incidental expenses—little matters which bob up without a word of warning. We feel called upon to meet them whether business is good or bad, and in the long run scarcely miss what they have cost. In fact, we don't allow them to bother us. Now, look at this. Here is something you can be proud to have in your home. Your entire family will enjoy and appreciate it, and it will be a fine addition to your library, which would really be incomplete without it. Consider my proposition critically. You will hardly miss the fifty cents, and before you know it the books will be all paid for. It is the prettiest offer ever made."

Mr. R.—"Oh, I know that, but I hate to obligate myself now."

Agent.—"Why, sir, it's too little a venture to be afraid of. Think of what you are getting, and how you are getting it. It is just like going to the

dentist to have your teeth filled. You dread the idea of sitting in the chair, but when it is all over you are awfully glad you have had it done. So with this encyclopedia. When you once get it, and have seen its full merits, you will wonder why you ever hesitated."

Mr. R.—"But I really have no time to read."

Agent.—"My dear sir, an encyclopedia is not made to be read like a newspaper or a novel. Its value is as a book for reference. If you have occasion to look at them only once a month it will be worth all the price you pay for it."

Mr. R.—"Come to think of it, a friend of mine has a set. I can use his when I need them."

Agent.—"But that is not like having a set of your own. For that matter, you could ask your neighbor to show you his clock, so you could see what time it was; but that is not like owning a clock. You could also borrow your neighbor's newspaper, but it is not always wise nor convenient to do these things. You cannot always

have them when you want them most. Take, for instance, a cold, wet, wintry night, and you at home by a nice, good fire, with wife and children gathered around you. Would you care to leave this cozy room and go out into the stormy night to your neighbor's library?"

Mr. R.—"Well, no. I guess I will speak to my wife and let you know this afternoon."

Agent.—"Mr. Rice, that is not business. You know your wife would like the books, and you also know you do not want to be bothered again. Your time is too precious, and so is mine. You can tell me right now as well as this afternoon."

Mr. R.—"I want the volumes bad enough, but I must have time to consider."

Agent.—"In order to make you safe I'll tell you what I'll do. I will send them to you with the distinct understanding that if your wife don't appreciate them you can have them for nothing. Is not that fair?"

Mr. R.—"That is fair enough—can't you come again?"

Agent.—"I just want to show you the advantages of this offer and then I'll go. In the first place, take the Blewtanical encyclopedia. It costs from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty dollars. Dippleton's costs from seventy-five to ninety-five, and Judson's, eight volumes, costs fifty-six dollars. The Monarch, in six volumes, costs sixty dollars; and the Mercury, in nine volumes, forty dollars; while the Peerless, the smallest standard encyclopedia, and only in three volumes, costs thirty-eight dollars. Now, mine is in twelve large volumes. It is four years later than any of the others, has all their merits, and more new features than all the rest put together. It is recognized as the standard edition all over the world, and I am offering it to you for less money than you can buy the cheapest of the others, and on such terms that you cannot afford to miss the chance."

Mr. R.—"But are not the others just as good?"

Agent.—"Perhaps—as far as they go. I am not running them down, understand. One of our greatest presidents was once addressing a literary society on the subject of books. Speaking of this class, he said there were no words strong enough to tell the merits of a good encyclopedia. Of course, if you bought any of those other editions, you would be getting good books, but they are a few years behind and cost so much more money. It is just like putting six coats of paint on a house when two will answer the same purpose."

Mr. R.—"How is it you can sell yours so much cheaper than the others?"

Agent.—"Because we are satisfied with larger sales and smaller profits. Our work is in no way inferior to the others; in fact, all authorities consider it superior, and my terms are so reasonable."

Mr. R.—"I should think you were taking big chances."

Agent.—"That is the very reason we interview

reliable parties only. Formerly, when one bought an encyclopedia, paying a fancy price for it, he would have to give a mortgage on house, business, wife, children and almost everything he possessed. He'd have to sign promissory notes with a judgment clause, and you know what that means. He would have to pay ten per cent interest, pay for expressage, and receive only one volume at a time. Under this proposition you don't sign notes, you pay no interest, no expressage, make no advance payments, give no security, and get the complete set of twelve volumes at one time."

Mr. R.—"How do I know that you are telling the truth?"

Agent.—"I am surprised at that question. Don't the thing look fair, right on the face of it? I offer to ship you a complete set, free of charge, and then give you one whole year in which to pay for them. Just think, my dear sir, could I afford to make misrepresentations on these conditions?

You are a business man, and so am I. Do you think I'd sell you one thing and ship you another?"

Mr. R.—"And you say it is a very late edition?"

Agent.—"Yes, sir, modernized and right up to date."

"Mr. R.—"Any maps?"

Agent.—"Certainly, sir. One hundred and nineteen maps, 13,000 illustrations, 17,000 pages, 57,000 separate and distinct subjects, 16,000,000 words, and an atlas department which represents every country in the known world. This department, by the way, is more extensive than any single atlas. It takes you into every spot on the face of the earth, from the diamond fields of Africa to the orange groves of Florida. It also gives a biographical sketch of all the notables of the various nations, something no ordinary atlas does. The whole encyclopedia is complete in every department. It gives the origin of every

language, the history of the world's religious and political developments, origin and growth of secret societies, manners and customs of all nations, treats broadly of architecture, mechanism, arts and science, taking you into a thousand channels heretofore unheard of. The illustrations are the great drawing card. In the department of mechanics, for instance, if you read the description of an article and do not understand it, you could turn to the illustration and see it, plain as daylight. Besides all these features it has an extra department, giving all the speeches made by our leading politicians during the late campaign."

Mr. R. (jokingly).—"But I can't read."

Agent.—"You dont have to, Mr. Rice. This is the parrot edition. Just open one of the volumes and it speaks for itself."

Mr. R.—"I have a dictionary. I think I can make that do."

Agent.—"For heaven's sake, man, don't compare an encyclopedia to a dictionary. One is a

collection of words only; the other a complete compendium of subjects. In fact, the encyclopedia is both, combined in one. A dictionary gives you no information except on single words. There is absolutely no comparison."

Mr. R.—"But I never take time to read."

Agent.—"You can't make me believe that. The life and push of our country come from men who read. The hustlers who get to the front are men who read, and all solid business men are well posted. Now, you are one of the solid business men of the town, and I know you could not be where you are unless you were well informed. I can tell the educated man the moment I see him."

Mr. R.—"You are getting along too fast. I don't pose for an educated man."

Agent.—"I should hate to call you a prevaricator, but they say around here that you are a great bookworm, and where there is smoke there is sure to be a little fire."

Mr. R. (feeling complimented).—"How are your books bound?"

Agent.—"In fine Russia leather, gilt-edged. They are designed for first-class libraries only."

Mr. R.—"And the collections?"

Agent.—"You can remit through the banks. The First National will be our agent here."

Mr. R.—"Shall I remit weekly?"

Agent.—"Oh, you can drop your fifty cents in a cigar box and send it in once a month. With business men like you that is all right."

Mr. R.—"Well, I might as well take a set now and be done with it. I see you will stick to me like a porous plaster to a lame back until I do."

If I had gone through the entire argument after this fashion with every purchaser I would not be alive now. Thank goodness, they were not all quite so hard on a fellow as Mr. Rice; and yet, when I began canvassing in the book business, do you know who I practiced on? The toughest customer I could find, one who was able to buy, but

from whom I felt certain I would not get a red cent.

I would argue on the good points of the work I was selling, and do all in my power to get an order, even though nine times out of ten I failed. Of course, when I got through I was terribly wound up, but I knew that my time had not been lost. I found out the weak points of my argument, and on the second customer I could correct my errors. I would keep this up for several days. It gave me good, practical experience, and in a short time I had a canvass strong enough to face anybody, and success followed me like a tramp does the odor of a good dinner.

I found that it paid to advertise. On coming into a town I would visit the newspaper offices and pay for little personal paragraphs, announcing my arrival and stating my business. This served to introduce me. By reading the following samples you will see that I desired to impress the people with the belief that I was a man of

great importance, and I generally succeeded. The Stormville Banner, for instance, would say:

"Mr. S. J. Weldon, representing prominent publishing houses in New York, is in the city, having arrived last night. During his stay he will endeavor to interest the literary people of Stormville by introducing the latest edition of Banner's encyclopedia, of which 70,000 copies have been sold. He makes a most novel proposition, and ought to be well received and do a flourishing business. Mr. Weldon bears the enviable reputation of being the most successful agent in his line in the United States and Canada, his sales so far this year footing up to the enormous sum of over five thousand sets."

Here is another:

"Prof. S. J. Weldon, the gentleman who is with us this week selling Banner's encyclopedia, recently wagered one hundred dollars with a gentleman of Hilt City, which town is twice as large as ours, and where he sold seventy sets, that he

would be equally successful in Stormville. Which will win the wager? That depends on which of the two towns prove the more appreciative."

This advertisement I used when I came across two rival towns. It worked up a patriotic excitement and assisted greatly in making sales. Another effective article read as follows:

"Prof. S. James Weldon, president of one of New York's largest literary clubs, arrived in the city last evening. He furnishes the new edition of Banner's encyclopedia and will call on our professional and business men in the interests of that magnificent work. Afterwards he will organize here a branch club of his parent society, the object being educational advancement and social intercourse. Gold prizes will be given the members making the best progress, and twice a year the local assembly will be represented at the grand lodge by two delegates. Once a year the grand lodge takes a tour around the world. Prof. Weldon was one of the party the last trip, and

says they were royally entertained by their foreign friends. He will, in a few days, call a private meeting of our leading citizens and address them in the interest of the enterprise." This ad. always gave me a wonderful prestige.

At the present day the publishers take a larger hand in scheming than formerly, yet the principal methods remain much the same. For instance. Books are advertised at a high price, but at the same time an offer is made to place a few sets with certain leading citizens at a greatly reduced figure. No information is given in regard to terms, but prospective purchasers are invited to write for particulars. Those letters of inquiry are sent to agents traveling for the house, and one of them drops into the town and tells Mr. Customer that he has made a special trip from New York or Chicago to see him personally. In the interview the agent brings all his batteries to bear; broadsides, mostly loaded with flattery, are poured into the victim's ear, and generally a

sale is landed. The neatest dodge I have ever seen is one originated by a Chicago firm. Coupons are given to the amount of the purchase, which are good at certain stores for ten per cent. of the price of any article purchased there, such an arrangement having been made with the merchants who are in the field to draw custom. If a man buys a fifty dollar set of books the company gives him fifty dollars worth of coupons. He buys, say five dollars worth of goods. He would pay four dollars and fifty cents in cash and fifty cents in coupons, thereby in the end virtually geting his books free. If the merchant would stand that the customer surely could.

Canvassing in the larger cities is very hard work, more so than in the smaller towns. So many of the office buildings have a sign hung up like the following:

"No Agents or Canvassers Allowed."

I have worked such places in the garb of an express messenger, and though the janitor may

have suspected my visits were unduly long he gave me no trouble. I have used the clerical uniform, both in such places and in small towns, with good effect. When I visited a town that was a railroad division point the garb of a railroad man suited me to a charm. I would pose as an eastern railroader on a lay-off, making a tour of the country and canvassing to help out.

In working the smaller towns I found that a rumor circulated to the effect that I was a foreign detective on the trail of some noted criminal was of great assistance. It would work a sort of undercurrent in my favor and give me prestige with a customer I otherwise could not get. It was really amusing at times to watch the crowds whispering to each other and sizing me up as I walked down the street. The thought of having a real live detective in their midst would always arouse their curiosity.

Thus, in selling books, and especially encyclo-

pedias, I varied my canvass to suit my respective locations.

I found that I had to be constantly on the watch to adapt the method of my approach to the nature of the individual. One man had to be taken by storm; another would surrender only after the slow process of a long continued seige. With some I made a strong argument upon subjects with which they were not supposed to be intimately acquainted; with others I had to call attention to the very points which they oftenest touched in their everyday life. With lawyers I had to confine my remarks a great deal to legal questions and debates; with doctors, to medicine and surgery; with ministers, to theology and the sciences and it was generally safe to ply a school teacher with such things as art, poetry and the classics, or a newspaper man with matters of general information. For merchants I had a little song about free trade or tariff, income taxes, imports and exports, the price of grain and the like,

and to mechanics, blacksmiths and builders I talked of machines and materials. Again, there were others who seemed to want to get away as far as possible from the grooves in which their own lives were running, and these people I had at a decided disadvantage unless their range of reading was a great deal wider than that of the average of their class.

Here is an instance of my manner of approaching customers:

I would walk rapidly into a man's office, as though it was the place I had been looking for all the time. I would state that I was directed to him as a gentleman well versed in literature and learning, and as that sort of sympathy was what I desired to meet in my business I thought I would run in as I was passing by, see him, introduce myself, and promise him a call by and by. Then I would start for the door, but stop as I turned the knob, make some suggestion in regard to his being considered authority on literature,

start for the door again, and draw him into questioning me, asking me of what books I was speaking, and the like. Then I was safe. If I could get a man who was able to purchase to ask me questions, and then listen to what I had to say, I was reasonably certain of a sale.

A man who can buy, and won't buy, is like the bird that can sing and won't sing. If you can once get him interested, and continue the argument without in any way exciting his anger, he can be made to buy. In handling a hard customer I found it a good plan sometimes to continue talking, without giving him much chance to say a word. I paid no attention to the objections he offered, knowing that in most cases they were of no weight with him, but only made as a pretext to get rid of me. I just kept on with my argument, and pretty soon he would be apt to come to time and think perhaps I was talking sense after all. If I felt him slipping through my fingers I talked all the harder, until, perhaps, the man

would give me an order for the sake of my pure audacity and to get rid of me.

Sensitiveness was a quality I absolutely discarded, substituting what some people would call cheek and gall of the purest and most unadulterated grade.

Did I always make people buy? Well, not always; but with fair subjects at least two out of ten would succumb, and in the encyclopedia business that would mean big money for a working day.

As a rule, a man is less easy to sell to than a woman. A woman is more accustomed to buying just as she has the money and opportunity. A man usually makes up his mind in advance, goes at his leisure to some local merchant and makes his deliberate selection. An agent drops in on him when all thought of making a purchase is far from him. There's the rub. I might have to go around such a man cautiously for half an hour to get him interested.

To do so successfully his curiosity must be aroused and his attention fixed. I would ask him if he had ever heard such and such a passage in a certain story. Then I would quote some very beautiful and touching extracts, or comical ones, which would make him laugh. In some way I started him in a desire to see the books. Then I was safe.

Perhaps the most pitching part of all my arguments was where I used flattery. If given in the right place and in the proper proportions, like the axe and the chicken, it always reached the neck.

It is not always easy for an agent or canvasser to gain an entrance to a private house, unless he uses some trick or wile to fit the occasion. Usually I found it the best plan to leave a sample volume at my first call, never offering to go beyond the door, and stating to the lady that it was for her husband to look at, but it would be a gratification if she would examine it herself. If the book excites the least interest the way will be

opened for a subsequent call. I have appeared at the door, when my ring was answered, as just drawing a big bunch of letters from my pocket. Accidently dropping two or three of them on the porch, I would politely ask the lady of the house if I could not assort them on a table. Believing that I had one for her she would invite me in. I was the inventor, I believe, of the envelope addressed to "the lady of the house," but I always had my little sample package, or nicely printed table of contents, addressed to the lady personally. Having gained an entrance, I presented this and then stated my business, finding little trouble in securing an audience.

Once, when I was trying to sell some books to a man, I had him interested, as I thought, but could not close the deal. While talking to him he pulled out his pipe and prepared for a smoke. Taking a cigar from my pocket I said, "My friend, try a twenty-five cent cigar."

The thought of smoking a twenty-five cent

cigar pleased him. He took it with a smile; the weed did the work; I got the order. After that I always carried a few goods cigars in my pocket.

Another time I remember going into a place of business and telling the proprietor I had just come from Hartsburg, his former home—I posted myself on the points before calling—and that while there I had met General Ball, who sent his regards. He had requested me to call and show his old friend what I had so interested the people of Hartsburg. In fact, he had given me a note of introduction—here I fumbled unsuccessfully in my pocket—but it seemed to have been mislaid, over which I appeared to be very much distressed. But I went through my canvass all right. I had gained the man's attention and sold him a set of encyclopedias.

A great many of the people would put me off until I came around again. With a general line of books I could use the closing out racket or the fire sale dodge. With encyclopedias I had a dif-

ferent story, explaining, perhaps, that this would be my last trip under present conditions. Before I could come again the international copyright law would go into effect. The last congress had passed a law whereby a copyright in another country held good in this, and when the law began to operate there would be a cash royalty of sixty per cent. to be paid on all copyrighted works. We had thirty thousand sets on hand and to avoid this large outlay on royalty we were going to unload a large portion at the mere cost of production, and by taking advantage of my offer now there would be a saving of one hundred per cent. This was always safe, because the international copyright law has been talked of for a hundred years, and today not one man in a thousand has any accurate knowledge of what the law amounts to, or how it affects the publishing business.

Alertness once got me an order for the most expensive and finest edition of the Banner ency-

clopedia. I approached a Mexican gentleman of education and wealth, but his manner was such that I had little hope. Incidentally, I asked his name. It happened to be the same as that of a noble Mexican general, whose biography was given in the book. I called his attention to the fact, and suggested that they were branches from the same family tree. Perhaps they were. At any rate he thought so and ordered a set with an eye to having the recorded history of his genealogy. So much for knowing what was in the books I sold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REBUFFS AND INSULTS—THE LAWYER, THE DOCTOR AND THE COON—AVOIDING A LICENSE—WORKING THE CITY MARSHAL—JOKES WITH THE MILLINER—BANKING TWELVE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

I do not care how careful and polite a man may be, he is always bound to meet with occasional insults. I found the three classes who were most apt to be insulting were those who were in straightened circumstances, those jealous of the prosperity of another, and those who were by nature rude and devoid of average sense. I always tried to confine my calls to the better class of people, and for that reason met with few insults, though I would occasionally drift into the wrong channels. Sometimes I gave as good as I got, and if I stretched the truth a little my conscience

did not smite me so long as I felt I had gotten fairly even.

Once I dropped in on an attorney, who was actually doing nothing but smoking a cigar and reading a paper covered novel. After I had introduced myself and was stating my business he said bearishly: "No, I don't want your books."

"But—" said I.

"See here, young fellow," he interrupted without giving me a chance to talk, "I don't want you to bother me. That's the trouble with you fellows. You just bore the life out of a man. Get out of here as quick as you can."

With that he pointed to the door.

"Well, sir," I said, "I will go. But I did not come up here to sell you anything. I wanted to engage an attorney in a matter that involves a great deal of money. One of the large concerns in your city is about to fail. My brother, who is a jobber in Chicago, has a claim against this firm, and, as I was coming here, he telegraphed me to

look after it. I was advised to call on you, and came in with the intention of giving you the case. I am glad I found you out in time. I certainly would not throw a thousand dollars into the hands of a man too ungentlemanly to allow me to state my business.

All the time I was speaking he was rubbing his hands together in an excited manner and was ready to apologize, but when done I walked off as rapidly as I could. To this day he is probably regretting the loss of a big fee. I hope so, and that it made him more polite in the future.

Shortly after this I called on a colored grocer of the name of White, who was busy with some customers when I entered. Looking up he asked me what line I was in, and I told him, "The Banner Encyclopedia."

"Well," he said, in a smart-Aleck tone, "I don't want your 'cyclopedy."

"But I have a special proposition to make and will drop in again when you are not so busy."

"Look heah," he answered, "yo' needn't come ag'in; I kain't wase no time on you fellows, and I wouldn't buy books from an agent nohow."

"I am not selling books, sir," I replied. "I am getting up an encyclopedic directory of prominent business men. But excuse me, Mr. White, I didn't know the proprietor here was a colored man, and as we don't care to have niggers in our directory I'll not bother you any more."

This last remark cut him deeply, but he had insulted me and I felt I had a right to answer him back. I think I showed him the difference between a colored gentleman and a nigger, if he never knew it before.

At another time I called on a physician, and when I explained my business he said to me with a pitying smile:

"So you are selling books, eh? Well, young man, you have my sympathy. You are the most useless article to be imagined, and you don't seem to know it."

"Sympathy to the devil," I exclaimed, angered more by his manner than his words. "Look at me and see if I need your sympathy. Here am I, with a fine tailor-made suit, a fifty dollar overcoat, patent leather shoes, diamonds all over me, traveling over the country, stopping at first-class hotels, having a good time and making money hand over fist. Does that look as though I needed your sympathy?"

"Now," I continued, "here you are, wearing a baggy pair of pants with fringe at the bottom, a shabby coat and vest that are old enough to vote, and a slouch hat that is not fit for a dog to wear. You sit in a little dingy 2x4 office, waiting for some sucker to come in and give you a dollar for a prescription. You eke out a miserable existence and see no real living at all. You are the man who needs sympathy, and I assure you, you have mine from the bottom of my heart."

With that I left him, too thunderstruck to answer me back. Of course, my talk to him was

not business, but it was a heap of satisfaction.

I have already touched on the matter of license. Notwithstanding I carried that decision of the United States supreme court in my pocket, I found that in some places the marshals were inclined to enforce some miserable city ordinance, without paying attention to the rulings of the higher powers. As I canvassed one day and delivered another, the most of them had to acknowledge that I was not selling outright, nor peddling.

Sometimes I thought it better to make arrangements to do my business through a local firm. By mentioning this fact to the chief of police and the license inspector I was generally allowed to go unmolested.

I recall one experience in which I avoided difficulty with a bull-headed official. It will serve as an example of methods sometimes used.

I went to an express office to get some samples my house had sent me. The agent, seeing that I was a canvasser, gave me some pointers on the

license questtion. He told me he was once in the same business and wanted to put me on my guard. I would find the new city marshal an obstinate fellow, who could not be worked. He was a regular old crank who would show no mercy to canvassers. I would either have to take out a license or run my chance of being arrested. As the license was so high as to be practically prohibitive the chances of doing business without a lawsuit did not seem encouraging.

Well, I thanked the agent and then worked the town without paying any license. How did I do it? This way:

Learning the marshal's name, I called upon him, introducing myself as the representative of a well-known eastern paper. I explained that I was writing up the country, and that this city was considered one of the most enterprising places in the state. I also stated that he was recognized as one of the most prominent citizens, and that I

had stopped off on purpose to get his biography for publication.

He was tickled to death and smiled an 8x10 smile. I touched up his vanity all through the conversation, and got his history from the time he left the cradle until he landed in the city marshal's chair—and it made mighty good reading when I wrote it out. I'll bet his hat didn't fit him that night.

When I finished the "write-up," I conversed with him a few moments on general topics, and then said:

"By the way, Mr. Marshal, my house is turning out a new encyclopedia in twelve volumes. Do you think I could do any business here in that line?"

He said the best way was to try. I explained all about the encyclopedia, stating that I only called on the upper ten, because they alone appreciated the best books. We usually only made the larger cities, but this was such a metropolitan lit-

tle place I thought I might get enough orders to justify a shipment and to pay the expense of the write-up I was making. Would he kindly give me the names of the most prominent people?

He not only gave me the names, but told me to go ahead; that no one should bother me. I made one hundred and seven dollars in that town, and went away with as large a smile on my face as the one the marshal wore while I was writing up his life.

I also found it a good idea to be supplied with a stock of jokes which could be used to fit almost any occasion. I had a natural sense of the ludicrous, anyway; and if I came across anything in the comic papers which might be of value I did not hesitate to salt it down for future use. As an instance of application, the following:

I dropped into a millinery store after an order for the encyclopedia. When I had spoken for a few moments to the proprietress, telling her that the book was full, complete and unabridged,

treating of every subject that could be known or mentioned, she asked me jokingly if it had any good cooking recipes.

"Why, certainly," I answered; "I'll read you a few of them."

To Make Clear Soup.

Take two pints of water, wash thoroughly on both sides, pour into a deep dish, and stir around in the kitchen until tired.

Stomach Cake.

Line a small boy with green apples and cucumbers. This can be prepared on short notice.

Lemon Pie.

Line a pie tin with puff paste, put in your lemons, build a lattice over the top and bake three weeks.

Calves' Foot Jelly.

Get trusted for a Chicago calf—they have the largest feet. Cut off the calf, which can be used for making hash or chicken salad, add a few molasses, strain through a cane-bottom chair, pour

in a blue bowl with pictures on it, set it in the shade to get tough, and then send to a friend contemplating suicide.

I have heard that the female sex are deficient in the sense of humor, but the milliner laughed heartily at these jokes, which happened to be new to her, and signed the contract for a set without a struggle.

Virtually I was in the book business for over nine years, in which time I handled scarcely anything else.

You may be sure I was acquainted with every wile and artifice of the trade. I had traveled all over the United States and Canada, visiting all the principal cities and interviewing the governor and other officers in each state and territory. I had crossed the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, thirty-two times. For years I seemed to have success without a break, and I dreaded no more of being "busted." All the time my bank account was growing, and in one year of pros-

perity I banked twelve thousand dollars in clear cash while selling encyclopedias.

How was that for a fakir? I will not say that I was tired of the life; but it began to look as though, like Alexander, I had no more worlds to conquer. Was it a wonder or was it not that I found I could go a step farther?

The succeeding chapters will tell.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REAL ESTATE FAKE—BOOMING A TOWN—MAKING A FORTUNE—TRICKS OF OTHER PEOPLE—ALL THIS WORLD IS A FAKE AND EVERY PERSON IN IT A FAKIR—THE POLITICIAN AND THE WIDOW—A DIAMOND RING FOR TWO CENTS.

"Almost twenty years in the faking and book business. How times flies; and yet I have gained enough experience in those twenty years to last a lifetime."

So I mused one day while tilted back in my chair in front of the "Ashland" hotel, the principal house in a western town, which perhaps you may recognize under the name of Buxton.

I remember, as distinctly as though the time was yesterday, all the surroundings of that little town. The place was on the eve of a boom, and the best informed were in a fever of excitement

over its prospects. I took out my bank book and looked over its pages.

No. The past ten years of my life had not been wasted. Each succeeding page showed a record of profits and gains, even though it was only when I switched from street selling and the like to the handling of a general line of books, and a little later on to the exclusive traveling in the interests of the Banner encyclopedia, that fortune seemed really coming at my command.

I had then what was a fair little fortune laid by. Of late years I had been always a winner, and felt sure that I could carry the "Banner" successfully for many years to come. Even in the little bits of speculation in which, more for the sake of diversion than profit, I had been engaged success had invariably crowned my efforts. Why should I not launch out more boldly? I believed I saw a chance to make thousands in the time I was taking to make hundreds, and without the possibility of any great loss. And if I did lose,

what matter, since I had strength and experience through which I could soon recoup myself?

The speculative fever had me, and sitting in that up-tilted chair I decided to hit the game for what it was worth before the fever rose with the rest of the world to its full height, thus giving me the best chance to be in shape and ready for the crisis. I bought a piece of land adjoining Buxton and had it cut up into building lots. I sold them all when the boom came for twelve dollars each. The deals were managed by local real estate agents, and after paying them their commission I found that on an investment of four thousand dollars I was six thousand ahead. Having bought at the right time there never was any danger that I would lose; while, as I had expected, I came out a handsome winner.

This speculation encouraged me to dabble in real estate on a larger scale. I realized that it was not like the old days when one waited for years while the land slowly grew into value, but

that with smart, far-seeing heads at the front fortunes might be made in a single night. I looked over the map and kept my ear to the ground, waiting for another favorable opportunity.

I found it at Harwood, where I bought several sections of land, which I cut up into town lots, holding them, at the outset, at thirty dollars a lot. As before, I had local land agents interested, who, seeing big money for themselves, assisted me in all kinds of schemes to boom the property.

They built—on paper—three railroads, a magnificent union depot, machine shops and factories, an opera house, and a line of street cars. There was in reality as fine a bit of water power at Harwood as one would want to see, and the site had other advantages. We got the attention of the people of the state turned in that direction by advertising, hired a job lot of engineers to survey for the three railroads, and got as far as to start the foundation of a two million dollar college. The street car lines were brought to the attention

of eastern capitalists, who own the franchise to this day. Outside people put in money and then came to look after it. One of the railroads was actually constructed, and another broke ground; the water power was turning the wheel of a real mill; a handsome court house stood in the public square; there was a hotel or two on Central avenue fit to grace any little city; there was a population that had risen from four hundred to four thousand, and more coming, and every evidence of prosperity, when I sold out my last lots. I had already seen some of my thirty dollar lots go up to three hundred, while the poorest land owner in the original town would have made a fortune if he had held on long enough. But I knew how to quit and when to quit. With a hundred thousand dollars to the good I retired gracefully, and before the turn of the tide. There were plenty of persons in after years to say, "If Weldon had stayed with us the boom would not have collapsed." But Weldon did not stay. I knew it

was only a question of time when the inflated values would take a tumble, so I stood from under and lost not a dollar in the wreck.

Since this successful venture I have been in numerous speculative deals, and the quality of being ever on the alert, acquired while faking in different capacities, has stood me well in my later career. I have always felt to a moment how long it was a sure thing to hold on, and have never been caught in a crash. Perhaps I have at times been too conservative, but I tell you, gentlemen, there is nothing like playing on velvet.

As to the methods by which I made my fortune, I have no desire to offer an excuse for them, and yet a few words may here be in order, to call attention to the fact that there are other fakirs in the world besides the man who travels with microscopic look-backs and goldentine pens. Before the reader undertakes to criticise me harshly let him look and see what is done every day in channels of "legitimate trade." I admit that I

practiced trickery during my years on the road, but I claim that any man is justified to use it in gaining his point, providing he does not misrepresent merits and gives value received. Show me the man who has not the ability to draw customers to him, or sense to employ business tact and trickery, and I will show you a man who will never amount to much in the world. His brethren in the trade are using them every day, and they are the ones who succeed.

If a merchant advertises a special sale, and gives you a yard of calico for three cents which cost him five, does he not throw out a leader to lure you into his store so that he can sell you something else at a profit? I remember once, walking down a business street in a large city, I saw twenty dummies in front of a clothing store, each of them cased in an overcoat of extra fine material. Hung to each one was a large placard:

"Special Sale of Overcoats Today.

Your Choice $4.98."

I picked on one I thought would suit me and went inside to buy it. When I told the salesman what I wanted he said, "Those goods on the outside are not in the special sale; but here are the $4.98 coats," and he pointed to a pile of inferior garments. Of course, they caught customers by the scheme, and was it not trickery?

Once I asked a preacher who was managing a church fair why it was they talked so strongly against lotteries and gambling, and then had so many schemes of chance at their fair, and so many of the young ladies working among the boys to catch their little ten cent pieces. He replied that without special features of some kind a crowd could not be drawn and the effort would end in failure. Isn't this trickery?

Do not understand me to be against the preachers. I am now a member of the church and an earnest advocate of religion. I am simply showing up the true side of life and human nature.

Is there any bigger grafter for fees than the

average lawyer or doctor? Go into his office and before he will name a price he will size you up and soak you accordingly.

Once I shipped a crate of picture frames to a town, the shipping agent telling me the rate was fifty-three cents. When I came to pay at the other end the rate was one dollar and six cents. The freight clerk told me that when shipped at owner's risk the rate was fifty-three; otherwise it was one dollar and six cents. Was not that trickery—and robbery besides?

Did you ever see a more unprincipled trickster than the average politician? Here is an illustration. In a certain county of a great state there were two candidates for the nomination for the office of county superintendent of schools; one, a man without a family; the other, a widow lady with two children. They were about equal in strength and it was uncertain which would win. The man, wanting to get his opponent out of the way, made her the proposition that if she would

withdraw and support him, and he was elected, he would make her his deputy and divide the proceeds of the office equally between them. She accepted and gave her whole time to the campaign. After the election he tried to ignore her entirely, swore that he had never entered into such an agreement, and on top of that circulated all sorts of scandalous reports concerning her. The poor woman took all this so to heart that she committed suicide, throwing two orphan children upon the world—and they were girls at that. Was not that the worst kind of trickery, treachery, knavery and hypocrisy? I call it murder in the first degree.

Once, when I was in the west, I stopped at the only hotel there was in the town, the proprietor being also a banker. The hotel made me a rate of ten dollars a week, and at the end of the seven days I tendered a draft for twenty-five dollars, which I had received from my firm that morning. The banker claimed I could not be sufficiently

identified and refused to cash my paper, but agreed to send it in for collection. He kept me there three days, waiting for money, and at the end of that time charged, in addition to the ten dollars for the week, two dollars per day for the extra three days, and seventy-five cents for collection. Now, wasn't that robbery as well as trickery? I knew he had "worked" me, for he could not send the draft to New York and get returns in three days.

In North Dakota there were two undertakers. One was poor, the other rich and owner of the only hearse in town. A poor man's wife died. He found that he could buy a coffin at the smaller establishment for a great deal less than from the other. He ordered it, but when he called to make arrangements for the hearse the proprietor would not let him have it, because the coffin was not bought at his place. The poor man was forced to go to the next town and procure a hearse. That seems even worse than trickery.

There is a large concern in Chicago which advertises to send you a one hundred dollar diamond ring for a two-cent stamp; and they do it, too. Here is the way the scheme is worked: An agent of the company sells you a ticket or coupon for one dollar. You send the ticket and nine dollars in cash to the firm, which in turn sends you ten other coupons. You sell these coupons to your friends for one dollar each, thereby getting your money back. Your friends must each do the same as you did, selling their coupons to their friends. As soon as your friends send the money they have collected you get your diamond, and when their friends do likewise each one of your friends gets his. So, you see, while the company is paid for the goods sent out, each man actually gets a hundred dollar diamond ring for a stamp. Now, isn't that up-to-date trickery? It is a sort of endless chain scheme, and is actually being carried on by a responsible firm in Chicago.

A great many times in my travels I have no-

ticed that the Salvation Army are particularly fond of holding meetings in front of those hotels which are most patronized by traveling men. The reason is obvious. They have an eye for the collections they invariably take up, and there is not a more cheerful giver on earth than the traveling man. I remember once seeing the Army collect twenty-eight dollars in front of a certain hotel, and then march up the street and work the next one. I do not censure them; I approve of their work, but I say this is trickery just the same.

One of the worst things in the line of trickery and fraud is the system of paying in scrip by certain corporations. These companies have their own stores, and in order to force the men to buy at them they pay wages in scrip, which is virtually only an order for goods at the company concern. Is not this an outrage? Officers and managers who are honored and respected wherever they go have the men work like slaves, and instead of paying in cash give them a due-bill, good

in trade alone, and only at the company store at that. By going through a lot of red tape, waiting perhaps three or four weeks, these due-bills can be cashed at ten per cent. discount. That is the best that can be done. Usually the laborer needs his money and thinks he is lucky if he can find some member of the company who will cash his order individually and on the spot at a discount of twenty-five per cent. Again, I call this robbery and trickery combined.

When I first landed in San Francisco a hackman led me to believe that he was a hotel runner and created the impression that I would get a free ride. All houses there run a free bus. When I reached the hotel he charged me two dollars. Without a kick I paid it, as I might have known better than to trust him.

In another city I noticed a case filled with a beautiful line of photographs. The following sign was in the center:

These Elegant Cabinets Just
$1.00 Per Dozen. Come Up and Have
Your Picture Taken."

You go upstairs and after the operator gets his camera fixed on you he tells you, by the way, that the photos are $1.00 per dozen unmounted; if you want them put on cards they are two dollars a dozen. Now, who in the world would want photos unless they were mounted on cardboard? If you don't put up the two dollars you get no pictures.

An enterprising restaurant man put a sign in front of his place, advertising "Ham and eggs at ten cents. Beefsteak and potatoes ten cents, including coffee, bread and butter, etc." You go in to eat and on the bill of fare printed in very small letters you find the following: "All single ten cent dishes twenty cents; all twenty cent dishes twenty-five cents."

I have seen instances on the road where hotel proprietors send their porters to the depot to yell

at you when alighting from the train, "Free bus for such and such a hotel." When you ride from the depot to the hotel the ride is free, but when you go back from the hotel it costs you twenty-five cents. I know of hundreds of hotels that charge their transient trade two dollars a day and their local patrons three dollars a week. Every traveling man on the road will tell you this is true. Some landlords even seem to go beyond this. I knew of one who was fond of getting up raffles, on perhaps a watch or a diamond ring, selling tickets only to transient customers. The raffle never came off, though this landlord would always claim that it had, and give the name of some fictitious person as the winner. I am glad to say that he was eventually sent to the penitentiary.

I could spend hours in calling attention to incidents like the foregoing, but what is the use? You can see, and you must know, that everybody is looking out for number one—every move,

every thought and every word uttered seems to have a selfish motive back of it. You must look out for yourself, or go under for sure. A great author once said that all the world is a stage, and all the persons in it merely players. He might have said, "All the world is a fake and all the persons on it merely fakirs."

Draw your own conclusions, then, from what I have written. Call me an unvarnished liar if you will, a dissembler, a hypocrite, a cheat, a dead-beat, what you like. To the untutored masses a successful fakir may seem to be all of these. You think his occupation is simply skinning the public. I know that his largest triumphs are in giving every man the full value for his money, and yet securing good profits for himself. Reconcile the two if you can; I did it long ago. Whether you succeed or not, if these pages have furnished you fair amusement I will be content. For no other reason were they written.

CHAPTER XX.

MARRIED AND SETTLED DOWN—RETIRED AND HAPPY—A DIP IN THE LAKE—THE WORLD IS ROUND AND WIDE—FAREWELL.

In this narrative I have given a clear, comprehensive view of a fakir's life, as I saw it in my own experience. I have made it no better and no worse, but just as I found it. In the years that I followed the calling I had many ups and downs, yet, on the whole, was constantly advancing. Before I had been at it long I accepted temporary difficulties as a matter of course—unpleasant while they lasted, but certain not to be of great duration. Before long I grew to have the most utter and complete confidence in myself, and faced the problem of the hour without a doubt of success. If I ultimately quit the road it was because, though still a young man, I could retire "with all my honors thick upon me." In other

words, I was fixed for life, if I chose to spend my days in idleness. That I subsequently added to my wealth by other means was nothing against my success as a fakir. Indeed, I am rather inclined to believe that the boom at Harwood was the greatest fake of all.

After that, as I have already explained, I kept my eyes open for good things, and when they came along I caught them.

One day when time was plenty on my hands I got to thinking:

"How old are you, old boy?" I asked myself.

"Thirty-eight," came the answer.

"Thirty-eight. Is it possible?"

Yes, there was no denying it. Time had slipped along and I scarcely noticed it going.

"Well, then," I said, "it seems high time you had a home of your own. There is something more than life at the hotels and boarding houses, in spite of its freedom. You ought to marry and settle down. You have a good income and could

support a wife not only comfortably, but in luxury."

Perhaps I was jesting with myself while talking in this strain; but very soon I got in sober earnest, and began to believe I had made up my mind to become a benedict.

I ran over a list of my lady friends. I knew a vast number of them casually, but was surprised to find with how few I had taken time to become more than incidentally acquainted. The list was not long, and I did not remember a single one that I would care to make my partner for life.

Should it be Sally Jones, Martha White or Jane Smith? Gertie Thompson, Maggie Brown, Annie Dawson, Kate Jackson or Lizzie Moore? They all had their good qualities, or I would not have been apt to give them more than passing notice; but they had their defects, and having noticed them I argued that I had less interest in them than a man

should have in a lady he expects to make his wife. I considered further.

Are the objections serious enough to stand in the way? Let me see.

"Sally Jones has red hair, and probably a bad temper must be under it. Martha White has a host of relations, and I might be expected to marry all of them; otherwise, she might do. Jane Smith is afflicted in the same manner. Gertie Thompson is mild-eyed and even-tempered, but hasn't enough spunk to take her own part—she's too good for me. Maggie Brown has a tyrant of a mother, whom I could not endure for a mother-in-law, and four young lady sisters who take after the maternal pattern. Annie Dawson and Kate Jackson are beauties, but are too full of frivolity and coquettishness, while Lizzie Cleopatra Moore (that is her full name) is broad-shouldered and masculine in build, and has pronounced views on the equal rights question.

"No. None of these ladies have the qualities I wish my wife to possess.

"But who else do I know?

"By jove, I have it.

"Miss Mattie Higbie, of course; the girl I made the subject of my first and only practice as a corn doctor. I owe that girl something for what I made her suffer, and if she lives, and is single, and seems to fill the bill, I'll make honorable amends by offering myself in payment of the debt."

How I came to think of her is a question. After all these years my remembrance of her was but hazy; yet in the intervening time I had more than once thought of her, and the promise I had made myself that I would some day see her again. I had never chanced to be in her neighborhood, however, and her life since I saw her was a sealed mystery.

Would she remember me? Would she cherish an abiding hatred for the clumsy corn doctor

who had once given her so much pain? No, that was hardly probable. I must have changed too much in the intervening time. When she saw me I wore no whiskers, and, in fact, was little more than a beardless boy, fairly disguised to act the part of a man. Now, a heavy brown mustache shaded my upper lip and side whiskers altered the expression of my face.

"Don't wait," has always been my motto, and was the one I used on this occasion. The preparations I had to make were few and simple, though I might be starting for a visit that would extend over months.

I did not disguise the fact, however, that this might be the greatest wild-goose chase of my life. Why should I imagine that Miss Mattie Higbie had remained single through all these years, or that I would care to claim her if she had? That she had changed greatly was to be expected, and it might be I was preparing myself for a greater shock than I was aware of. Well, time should

show. I might as well be doing this as anything else, and it cost no more. I traveled in a Pullman through lands I had once viewed from brake-beams of a box car, or the platform of the blind baggage, and possibly the same negro porter touched his hat and whisked off my clothes who had once shied a brick at my head.

Yet in the place itself there was not so much change, but when I debarked from the train it seemed I had been there but yesterday. The same buildings, neither more nor less dingy, the same crowds thronging up and down the streets, or lounging idly on the same corners. So it looked, and when I sought out the hotel where I had once stopped there seemed to be no change either. I was half afraid to go in for fear the landlord would recognize me and whisper the lynchers would be on hand that night.

I might have saved myself all trouble on that score. The house had changed hands, had been refitted on the inside and was quite an up-to-date

hotel. I registered and found myself at once very much at home. The next thing was to find out something about Miss Mattie, and here I was, for the moment, at a loss. I did not care to mention her name until I had a clearer idea of what would be my course of procedure, and concluded, for a time at least, to trust to chance and my own resources. As a preliminary, I took a stroll out to the Higbie cottage. The house was there, but, alas, it knew the Higbies no more. Some other name was on the door, and for the moment I half fancied that all trace of my affinity was lost. I paced back towards the hotel, a sadder and a somewhat uncomfortably wiser man.

But was there ever an hour when luck was not with me? As I sauntered through the business portion of the city my eyes fell upon the sign: "John J. Higbie, Real Estate and Insurance. General Solicitor for the Stromboli."

I had never heard of John J. Higbie before, but you may be sure the name sounded familiar.

I turned into the stairway and mounted the steps as though this had been my goal from the first.

I found Mr. Higbie in his nicely furnished office. He was a well preserved veteran of the civil war, straight as a dart, keen as a sword, and, withal, as fine a specimen of the southern gentleman as I wanted to deal with. He also bore unmistakable evidences of prosperity.

Without hesitating I opened my business. I had a few thousands loose and was looking for a safe little investment, which would give me business interests in that vicinity. If things pleased me I might have more to invest when I had explored the ground. We talked business for an hour, and in that time I hardly thought of Mattie once.

As I rose to go I remarked that his name, though not a common one, sounded very familiar, and asked if there were any more families by the same name living in the vicinity?

No; he and his daughter Mattie were the only representatives there of the family.

With that I knew I was on the right track, and took my leave. All things can come to the man who waits, and I was willing to enjoy my suspense for a little longer. I went away with a strong feeling of satisfaction. It is true I had put myself in line for making a deal of some thousands of dollars which I had never thought of two hours previously, but what of that? The investment looked on the face of it as though it might be a good one; and, anyhow, if I could find Mattie it would be cheap at two thousand dollars—profit or loss. I was already just that far gone.

To make a long story short, I was on the right track. When I mentioned to other people that I was transacting some business through Major Higbie it was not out of place to follow with a casual question about his family. In that way I learned that Miss Mattie was a very popular lady, who presided over her father's house and table

with dignity and grace. If she had never married it was not for want of opportunities, but because probably the right man had not yet come.

"Thank heaven," said I to myself. "The right man is here now, but he was a long time coming. The next thing is to arrange a meeting."

Major Higbie did that. I had not yet closed the original trade proposed, but in his mind I was surely destined to do it, and was now talking of other deals. The major invited me to his house to take supper and talk matters over. That was the way I met Mattie the second time.

Jove! How handsome she looked. There was the same big blue eyes and the same tawny hair piled high on her head, but she had matured into a beautiful and glorious womanhood, which I could only wonder at and worship. Thinking it over a little later on in the evening, I could not help but wonder that neither father nor daughter had apparently noticed my confusion, and I breathed a prayer of thanksgiving that I had not,

as I was on the eve of doing, blurted out, "I am a corn doctor, selling corns, bunions and ingrown nails." I had rallied after that first bit of confusion, however, and we three passed a very pleasant evening. I was rich enough to feel satisfied; had traveled all the country over, and selling encyclopedias had been a liberal education of itself. When I went away I knew I had made a favorable impression and was proud of it.

The rest was a foregone conclusion.

Of course, I never closed the land deal with the major, but I led him to think he would eventually catch me.

The days drifted along into weeks, and the weeks into months. I lived at my hotel, but had the run of the Major's house. Mattie and I became almost inseparable, and I think I had a pretty good idea of what the answer would be when I laid my heart and fortune formally at her feet.

Five weeks later we left for the north on our

wedding tour, and the first place we made any lengthened stay was at the old homestead, where I had passed the first years of my life. The old folks were still alive and welcomed us with open arms.

Prosperity had been with them as well; but, alas, they showed too well the ravages of time and the marks left by labor. They were aged even beyond their years, while for Mattie and I time had seemed to stand still.

We went to "meeting," now held in a beautiful little church, instead of the old school house. The boys I had played with in my youth were there, grown into men, many of them old before their time. When I looked around I could see in every bent back, knotted hand and furrowed brow what I might have grown into, and shuddered. Father probably understood my thoughts, for on the way home, when I told him what money I had made, he said, "I am not sure, Jim, but perhaps you are right. At least I can see what you might have

done had you stayed on the farm. And, Jim, your wife is charming."

One day while in Chicago I said to my wife:

"Mattie, do you remember the circumstance of a man calling on you a number of years ago who said he was a corn doctor and the awful mess he made in treating your foot?"

"Do I remember him?" and her wrath seemed to rise at the thought. "I should say I do, and I would like to treat him—with—a dip in the lake."

"Then, throw your husband in," I said, looking her straight in the face; "I am that corn doctor."

She was so surprised at my answer that she could not say a word, but sat staring at me with wide open eyes. There we sat for some moments, looking into each other's faces, until both broke into a long and hearty laugh.

All this occurred some years ago, and I don't think my wife has altogether overcome the desire to give me a dip in the lake. At any rate, if I ever happen to displease her she says she thinks the

time is surely coming to carry out her threat.

I am now a happy and prosperous man. My family enjoys all of the comforts and many of the luxuries of life, and the sound of the wolf growling at the door is only a distant echo, reminding me that once at times I was destitute, and that I should not forget those who are unfortunate now.

What more could a reasonable being ask for? No more, I am sure.

As I said in my introductory remarks, this book is written with a view of showing the inner workings of a successful fakir, as well as to amuse those people generous enough to peruse its pages. I hope it has kept within its range.

The world is round and wide, and on its surface is found all kinds of people. Some take to this and some to that occupation. All have not the same inclination, and therefore we should be generous in our thoughts towards those who do differently from us.

In his way a blacksmith is as good as a doctor, a hod carrier as good as a merchant, a clerk as good as his employer, a cobbler as good as a lawyer, and a fakir as good as a statesman. The president of the United States is no better than the poorest man who helped to elect him.

We have all equal chances to lose or make, as we ourselves show our capabilities. If we were all started from one point, on a road leading to some goal, we know by observation that some would falter and fall by the wayside, while others would go straight on to their destination. We see all this daily.

But some of those who fall are persevering and rise to their feet, saying, "I will win; others have done it." Making a great effort, they start on their journey again, sometimes overtaking those who have been in the lead. These are the kind of men who make a success of their business, the men who take for their motto, "Never say fail."

THE END.

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